

Understanding showed maturity, mutual respect, says Deputy PM

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By Farush Khan

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi described the understanding between Umno Youth and Suqiu which led to the seven contentious points contained in the latter's appeal be "put aside" as a victory for Malaysians.

Congratulating both parties for the suc-

cessful meeting, the Deputy Prime Minister said the understanding derived was very important as it was an example of what could be achieved in the true spirit of *musyawarah* (consensus seeking) and mutual respect.

"It goes to show that there is no sensitive issue that cannot be resolved in the Malay-

PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 2, COL 4

DPM: A need to preserve harmony

Nst - 6 JAN 2001

FROM PAGE ONE

sian way," he told editors at his office here today.

Abdullah, who is also Home Minister, was reacting to a joint announcement by Umno Youth and the Malaysian Chinese Organisations' Election Appeals Committee made separately earlier today.

"(On this score), I wish to congratulate both Umno Youth and Suqiu for their decision and understanding that the situation (over the issue of the seven points) which had led to restlessness and tensions should not (be allowed to) continue."

The Umno Youth-Suqiu understanding had clearly also showed that they understood the need to preserve multi-racial harmony in this country, said Abdullah, who is Umno's deputy president.

It is learnt that the decision was made after four meetings held over 26 hours between Umno Youth and Suqiu representatives.

He said he would like to believe that this announcement was acceptable to all parties and as such, the matter should not be blown out of proportion.

If there was any comment on the matter by any party, he said, it should be done in the usual Malaysian spirit of *musyawarah*.

"There is no need (for anyone) to describe the matter (related to today's decision) as a victory to one party or a defeat to another.

"It is actually a victory for Malaysians who always like to see racial harmony maintained."

Abdullah also touched on the Government's tolerant and transparent approach, citing the setting up of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) as an example.

He said not many had ever thought before that the Government under Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's leadership would allow the setting up of a body such as Suhakam, but this had happened. "If we had considered it as not important, we would have shied away."

Suqiu had submitted a 17-point appeal comprising 83 sub-points.

Malay organisations had strongly opposed the appeal, terming them as "demands", maintaining that the special rights of the Malays are non-ne-

gotiable as they are enshrined in the country's constitution.

It was seen as "wise" for Umno Youth not to insist that the other appeals by Suqiu be dismissed as "they are not strange topics to us," Abdullah said.

The remaining appeals pertain to national unity, upholding of human rights and justice, curbing corruption, education, the environment, a fair media, restoring confidence in the police force and upgrading social services. "These are being continuously addressed by the Government," Abdullah said.

He pointed out that there was no policy by the Government that was accepted by everybody in the country, but the Government of the day had to be "the Government of the people, for the people, by the people".

Abdullah said what made the people successful in the various aspects of development in this country was the good relationship and the priority always given to the spirit of goodwill among the races.