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Abdullah-Ramadan(With Pix)

MAINTAIN RESPECT FOR EACH OTHER'S RELIGION- ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 15 (Bernama) -- Malaysians should continue to respect each other's religion and culture to guarantee the nation's present peace and comfort, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said this Malaysian attitude of mutual respect was increasingly evident during Ramadan when non-Muslims waited alongside their Muslim countrymen in shops for the breaking of the fast so that they could together eat at the same table.

"The practice now is for non-Muslims not to eat until the time for the breaking of the fast, as they wish to begin eating together with the Muslims who have been fasting," he said when launching the Ramadan Bazaar 2001 in Jalan Masjid India here.

Abdullah said inviting non-Muslims to join in breaking-of-fast functions did not present any feeling of uneasiness among Muslims.

He said even though Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had recently declared Malaysia as an Islamic State, non-Muslim citizens would continue to have a role in the country's development and their rights would remain protected by the country's laws.

"This is a fine example of an Islamic country....collaboration and togetherness among people of various races and religions," he said.

Abdullah also expressed the hope that the business spirit to earn a living during Ramadan would be continued even after the holy month.

A variety of goods, foodstuffs and Hari Raya items are on sale at the Ramadan Bazaar organised jointly by the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Tourism, Kuala Lumpur City Hall, Masjid Jamek and the Malay Petty Traders and Hawkers Association.

Earlier, Abdullah also launched the preparation of 1,422 types of porridge which would be sold to the people in aid of the Afghanistan Refugee Fund.

The event organised in collaboration with Utusan Melayu (M) Berhad attracted 1,422 participants and would be entered into the Malaysia Book of Records.

Meanwhile, Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said the selling and buying activities during Ramadan had been accepted as part of Malaysia's culture.

He said the festive shopping mood had helped create harmony and close understanding among the various races in Malaysia.

This unique atmosphere and culture of ushering in the festival was an event which should be rightly preserved by Malaysians and even practised by foreign tourists, Abdul Kadir added.

Some 300 foreign tourists were invited from various parts of the world to the function so that they could have a closer look at the activities of Malaysians during Ramadan.

The event would be promoted as a tourist attraction.

-- BERNAMA

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