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Abdullah: Opposition being narrow-minded

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The decision of opposition parties to reject the invitation to join the Barisan Nasional shows that they are narrow-minded and only concerned with their own struggle and not the country's future.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today the Opposition should take into consideration the progress that Malaysia would make if all political parties were united.

"They should not make assumptions and misinterpret our intention. We in the Barisan Nasional have 14 parties and are already strong. However, we are willing to co-operate with the Opposition and invite them to join us as we want to ensure there is peace and harmony in the country which will benefit the people."

Abdullah, who is also BN deputy chairman, said this at the Deepavali open house hosted by MIC president and Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu at Sekolah Menengah (C) Chung Hwa.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had, on Saturday, invited the opposition parties to join the BN.

"The total rejection by the opposition parties, especially Pas, shows they are arrogant. They should not claim that we are trapping them," Abdullah said.

Samy Vellu said the opposition parties should realise that the country would enjoy more development if they joined the BN.

"Pas leaders especially should understand this and be more concerned about struggling for the people's interests."

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said in the aftermath of the 1969 racial riots, the then Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak invited all opposition parties to join the ruling coalition.

"He wanted to concentrate on physical and social development and reduce politicking among the different parties," said Dr Lim, who is also Primary Industries Minister.

Gerakan, which was an opposition party then, was admitted to the Alliance, and had since worked closely with the other component parties like Umno, MCA and MIC.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik urged the opposition parties to reconsider their stand.

"We are inviting them to join us so that we can be united to face challenges, especially economic challenges and colonisation. We have to stand together to face all this."

Parti Keadilan Nasional president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail said the party's main priority now was to free detainees like Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. However, it appreciated the invitation to join the BN.

She said the invitation showed that Keadilan was a responsible and moderate party fit to be in the ruling coalition.

"We are firm in our co-operation with Pas and will continue to maintain ties with the DAP," she said in a statement today.

Meanwhile, DAP secretary-general Kerk Kim Hock said Dr Mahathir's invitation was not sincere as it was targeted only at Keadilan.

"Nevertheless, I wish to stress that the DAP's position has always been that although we are in the Opposition, there are common issues of concern which we are prepared to co-operate with the Government," added Kerk, who is also Kota Melaka MP in a statement.