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Address columbarium issue, Penang govt told

ALOR GAJAH: Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi wants the Penang government to be transparent and open with the people about a controversial project on Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah.

He said protests against the proposed construction of a columbarium must be resolved and the onus is on the state government to explain the matter.

"We don't want this problem to drag on. Sometimes, we have to act firmly and the explanation given must be correct and acceptable," he said after attending his department's family day at A' Famosa Resort yesterday.

On Saturday, the Malaysian Buddhist Association asked the developer to stop misusing Buddhism for commercial purposes.

Its secretary, Lim Tien Phong, said the association, which represents over 700 Buddhist organisations nationwide, is strongly against the developer calling part of the commercial project "a Buddhist institution".

Abdullah sent the message that free-flow of information is paramount to good governance.

On corruption, Abdullah said graft, especially among the Malays, cannot be tolerated and

should be eradicated.

"We cannot allow it to spread. We must arrest it and eradicate it," he said.

He was commenting on Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's advice, especially to Malays, to avoid corruption or risk losing the country.

At the Transparency International Malaysia Integrity Awards presentation on Saturday, the prime minister said many Malaysians viewed it as an easy way to get rich.

On whether there were any reports of corruption against Home Ministry staff, Abdullah, who is also home minister, said no complaint has been received.

"But if there is any, an investigation will be conducted."

On about 20 abandoned construction projects here, he said the matter would be resolved.

"We will complete the abandoned projects while those that have not taken off will be tendered out," Abdullah said.