

11 JUN 2004

Najib-Kit Siang

PRIME MINISTER BEING A MUSLIM IS A NON-ISSUE- NAJIB

PUTRAJAYA, June 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said today the Prime Minister of Malaysia being a Muslim is a non-issue as the majority party in Parliament is Umno and hence the head of government is chosen from that party.

This had always been the practice and the people had accepted this and there was no reason for DAP Chairman Lim Kit Siang to raise this issue now, the Deputy Prime Minister said.

"I do not know as to what is Kit Siang's aim in raising this matter as for Malaysians it is a non-issue and there is no dispute about it," he added.

Najib said indeed there was no provision in the Federal Constitution saying that the head of the Federal Government should be a Muslim.

"But by convention it is such. If things are working well, why should we bring it up as an issue," said Najib to reporters after talks with visiting Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer at his office here.

Najib said this when asked to comment on the recent speech in Parliament by Lim, who is also Opposition Leader, in which he questioned former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's declaration of Malaysia as an Islamic State and the practice of the head of the Federal Government being appointed from among Muslims.

On his talks with Downer, Najib said Australia felt that more efforts should be made to encourage Australian industrialists to invest in Malaysia.

He said Downer also raised the possibility of his country and Malaysia signing a free trade agreement (FTA) for their mutual benefit.

Najib said this matter was being studied by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry.

"I believe that after the study it will be tabled at the Cabinet meeting," he added.

-- BERNAMA

MAM MAM AAM

