

**Red Devils 2, Inter-faith confab 0**  
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The cabinet has drawn flak for finding the time to discuss the controversy surrounding Manchester United's visit to Malaysia but not the 'postponement' of the Building Bridges International Islam-Christianity Inter-Faith Conference.

In a statement today, Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang said the cabinet had raised the English football club issue during two consecutive meetings.

"Malaysians are concerned that the cabinet has a misplaced sense of priorities when it has absolutely no time at all in its last two meetings for the issue of the Building Bridges conference.

"Why didn't the Cabinet take note of the grave damage to Malaysia's international reputation as a model of inter-religious harmony and goodwill and the credibility of the prime minister as a moderate Muslim leader and advocate of inter-religious and inter-civilisational dialogue caused by the cancellation," he said.

Lim said Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was again on an international tour to preach his message of inter-civilisational, inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, understanding, goodwill and peace.

He said at the Meiji university in Tokyo two days ago, Abdullah stressed that dialogue between cultures and civilisations is now another pre-condition to achieving global goals of peace, security and prosperity.

"It is sad and even pathetic however that the prime minister's international message is being ignored locally, even by his own cabinet," noted the opposition leader.

### **National tragedy**

Lim also asked why not a single cabinet minister had "dared to be questioning enough" to inquire about the conference.

"It is sad and a national tragedy that the present cabinet seemed determined to prove former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad right again and again that it is a 'half-past six cabinet'," he said.

On May 12, Abdullah said the conference had not been cancelled but postponed as it clashed with "some urgent matters" of the prime minister that coincided with the dialogue.

"What are these "urgent matters" which justified the last-minute cancellation. What are the new dates given by the prime minister

"Or will it be "postponed indefinitely" until after the next general election, with no guarantee or certainty that the 2007 conference would be held in Malaysia at all? asked Lim.

The Building Bridges Global Interfaith Seminar was scheduled for May 7-11.

Thirty world-renowned Islamic and Christian scholars and theologians were to deliberate under the theme 'Humanity in Context: Christian and Muslim perspectives on being human'.

The conference was to coincide with the first visit of the Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams to the Anglican Church of Malaysia. He was also slotted to chair the three-day conference.

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