

PM: Don't politicise sexist remarks issue
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today advised "irresponsible" parties against politicising the issue of two MPs uttering sexist remarks in Parliament.

However, he wanted the incident to be a lesson for everyone.

In a parliamentary written reply, Abdullah disagreed with Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang who claimed that the Cabinet had "misjudged and mishandled" the issue.

"Lim's opinion is untrue, and reflects his irresponsibility," said the premier.

He was responding to Lim (DAP-Ipoh Timur) who asked the prime minister to state whether the cabinet's "misjudgment and mishandling" of the May 9 incident had damaged Malaysia's international image.

He had also asked what lessons did the Cabinet learn from the incident.

Abdullah said the Cabinet always takes justice into consideration and that is why MPs Mohd Said Yusof and Bung Mokhtar Radin were referred to the Women, Family and Community Development Minister Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.

"The duo have extended a public apology to all women, and they have also explained that they did not mean to insult women or hurt their feelings," he added.

He said they had declared their respect for women and the Cabinet felt that the issue had been solved.

Image not tarnished

However, Abdullah said the government regrets the incident and has reminded everyone, especially MPs and those in high positions, to be more responsible.

"We hope that this incident will be a good lesson to everyone," he added.

Abdullah also disagreed with Lim that Malaysia's image had been "severely" tarnished by the episode.

"The government feels that the public and international community are matured to differentiate comments from two individuals and systemic sexism," he said.

In this case, he added, it is evident that the comments did not result from systemic sexism because it did not reflect the stance of the majority of MPs.

"Besides, I also believe that Malaysia is known internationally as a progressive country and our track-record in women's development is the best among other developing nations," he noted.

Abdullah said the issue was blown out proportion by the opposition for their own political

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