

Pak Lah defends BTN courses
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Courses organised by the Biro Tata Negara (BTN) or National Civics Bureau under the Prime Minister's Department do not contain elements of racism, former prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today.

He said the BTN was not a racist bureau and had never been, adding that he had participated in the BTN programme.

Abdullah, who was the minister in-charge of the BTN in 1981, felt that the BTN issue should not have been sensationalised by any quarters as the courses were meant to nurture patriotism and good values.

Nevertheless, he lauded the Cabinet's decision to revamp the BTN curriculum, in line with the 1Malaysia concept mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak. Abdullah was speaking to reporters after launching the Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia (Ikim) working programme here today.

The Ikim chairman also presented awards to nine recipients of the IKIM Excellence Award 2009.

Meanwhile, Abdullah said Ikim would intensify efforts to enhance understanding of Islam by Muslims and non-Muslims.

For this purpose, six seminars have been lined up. They are 'Religion and Human Rights: Towards a Better Understanding', 'The Resurgence of Islam Movement in the Malay World' and 'Mental Health Against Current Life Challenges', among others.

On another development, Abdullah said it was vital for Islamic preachers to have proper academic qualifications and certification of authority from the state religious department before conducting a religious class.

- *Bernama*

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