

PM counters critics on wide range of issues"

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KUALA LUMPUR: He spoke for three hours, the longest time he has spent on the floor of the Dewan Rakyat, winding up the debate on the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

And Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi did it with ease, taking all questions, especially from the Opposition MPs.

He touched on almost all the issues raised by the MPs over the last 10 days of the debate.

He said God was his witness when he said he would implement all the programmes in the 9MP.

In his 22-page speech, which was interrupted numerous times by the Opposition MPs, Abdullah spoke on corruption, public sector performance, formation of the Independent Police Complaint and Misconduct Commission, Islam Hadhari, economic growth, racial integration, equity ownership plans and other issues.

He reiterated that the introduction of Islam Hadhari for development did not cause problems among the different races in the country.

Abdullah was interrupted by Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timur), but he was not to be distracted. He said Islam Hadhari was for the betterment of everyone.

"Although some people cannot accept it, Islam Hadhari does not interfere with their beliefs. Islam Hadhari is based on universal principles."

Abdullah said he had spoken to many people and Islam Hadhari was well received by them.

"I have also been invited to talk on Islam Hadhari all over the world including Britain, Australia and Denmark. They all received it well, given the situation where there is animosity against Islam. There is no reason for them to be nice to me but they accepted my talk

on Islam Hadhari," he said to the thumping of tables by BN MPs.

Lim tried to interfere, saying that he supported Islam Hadhari but merely brought up the issue because it was against the Rukun Negara and asked if it had received the nod from the Cabinet.

Abdullah said it was a holistic approach aimed at the nation's development.

On the public service performance and "little Napoleons" that he, had mentioned last week, Abdullah said there were some who behaved in such a manner.

"Similarly in the police force, there are some who are corrupt and some others who do not perform their duties well. Not all are angels.

"Just because of some of these people, the public should not go bashing the public service or the police."

On corruption, he said: "I have not let up on the fight against corruption. Others may assume whatever they want ... I am not bothered.

"We cannot rush in and arrest someone because we have some evidence. We have to be absolutely sure before we arrest and charge him."

The wearing of the *tudung* by all women police personnel during the Police Day celebration was raised by Fong Poh Guan (DAP-Batu Gajah).

Abdullah said it was only for one function. "Don't turn it into a religious issue," he added.

On the increasing number of illegals in Sabah, a subject raised by Chong Hon Min (Independent-Sandakan), Abdullah said: "It is a big problem. But as long as there is poverty in southern Philippines, there will be illegals flooding into Sabah.

"We are taking action, but we cannot take drastic measures because this would result in other problems."