

BN leaders back Abdullah's stand

KUALA LUMPUR: Barisan Nasional party presidents came out in force to support Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday, echoing his sentiments that Kongs Raya celebrations should go on.

MCA president Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said the party was of the opinion that the view that Kongs Raya celebrations was against syarak law, or Islamic doctrine, had negative implications for a multi-cultural country.

"Kongs Raya celebrations are a means of encouraging harmony among the many races in the country. It has nothing to do with religious beliefs.

"You have to look at it from a socio-cultural aspect.

"It is an integration-building activity that builds the Malaysian spirit," he said.

Ulama attending a conference

in Ipoh had on Tuesday issued a statement asking the Government to review its practice of holding Kongs Raya celebrations to ensure that it do not contradict the syarak law.

Datuk Seri Harussani Zakaria, the chairman of the working committee for the conference, had said that the review was necessary because celebrating the festivals of other religions would erode the Muslims' faith and could lead to blasphemy.

Gerakan president and Energy, Water and Communications Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik called for the Government to resist all such calls.

"Tradition must go on. It is a way of life for us and we must not let anyone spoil the fabric of Malaysian society," he said.

PPP president Datuk M. Kayveas said the ulama should be

careful when making decisions or statements such as the one regarding the Kongs Raya celebrations.

He said the conference should leave such decisions to the Government.

"Open houses have become a Malaysian trademark. No other country in the world does this sort of thing. When it comes to our open houses, the whole world watches."

Kayveas said Islam was a tolerant religion but statements such as the one made by the ulama would give people the wrong impression.

Meanwhile, Abdullah tonight held a meeting with all the state Umno liaison heads to discuss current issues.

The closed-door meeting, which lasted about three hours, ended about 11pm at the Prime Minis-

ter's Office at the Perdana Putra building here.

Johor Menteri Besar, Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman who is also the State Umno chief, said that at the meeting Abdullah had mentioned that the Government would give a response to the issues raised by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Abdullah also reminded the state Umno liaison heads to monitor all projects implemented under the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) to ensure that it had the desired impact.

Accordingly Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, the Prime Minister said that the people must also appreciate that the Government was not only planning projects and programmes under the 9MP but also stressed on the implementation aspect.