

Abdullah: Ask questions but don't insinuate

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysians have the right to question the government or seek answers on issues, the Prime Minister said yesterday.

"If people question, then we must have answers. We do not have a problem. If we are transparent, what is the problem? We are not liars. The actions we take are based on facts," said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on his return from Mecca after performing the umrah.

But there was one caveat: Drop the sarcasm, insinuation and innuendoes.

"If you want to ask, ask properly. Don't make trouble. We are very peaceful. If there is a problem, discuss it properly. That is important," he said.

Abdullah was commenting on a call by Gerakan to the Economic Planning Unit to disclose the methodology it used in finding that the Bumiputera share of the economy was only 18.9 per cent.

The statement by Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik follows a few days of robust debate on a study by the Asian Strategy and Leadership Institute which suggested that the Bumiputera corporate equity ownership was as high as 45 per cent. After the government rejected the think-tank's report, several politicians and non-governmental organisations suggested that certain elements were trying to exploit

the more open style of Abdullah to sow seeds of discord.

On the flip side, others said that the administration should be more open to diverse opinions.

Abdullah had answers for both groups.

He said it was all right for people to question government policies.

"We don't lead and lie, we lead and: want the best for all

Malaysians, not just one particular party.

"We have to see the whole situation, not just one quarter or a corner. That is important."

Abdullah also noted that the younger generation being idealistic, had a lot of questions, and the government had to answer them.

"We don't want to shut their mouths, as things will continue to

burn in their hearts, and this will lead to dissatisfaction. To open up on important things is not something that troubles us. It won't trouble us.

"The young people who question are also Malays; it's not like all Malays are silent on issues. We are ready to give opinions and we hope they will not go overboard, make all sorts of accusations."