

Warning to those who undermine, religious balance

THE Government will not tolerate anyone trying to undermine the country's delicate religious balance and social contract.

"I promise you that I will take stern action against any group - Muslim or non-Muslims - that seeks to undermine this delicate balance by questioning the status of Islam or by inciting people based on bogus allegations and fictitious threats," said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The Prime Minister warned against attempts to dispute the social contract as it would adversely affect the nation's stabil-

ity and harmony.

will not allow it to happen at any cost. No one should even attempt to test the Government's resolve on this issue. If the need arises, the Government will act swiftly and firmly in enforcing the existing laws to ensure that our peace, stability and prosperity is not jeopardised," he added.

On Islam Hadhari, the Umno president stressed that it neither created threats nor incited Muslims against any one. However, some quarters had misinterpreted Islam Hadhari as an excuse to become more conser-

vative and radical.

"Long accepted cultural practices such as wishing other Malaysians during their festivals are how deemed, as taboo. Joint open houses are now condemned.

"Have we reached such a level of intolerance? When did we become ultra-conservative?" he questioned.

"It will not make us more Islamic if we do not greet another person during their celebrations, just as my faith is not shaken when I go to a Deepavali or Christmas open house."

On the recent SMS sent out on the purported mass baptism of Muslims, Abdullah said: "There were unproven claims that hundreds of Malay Muslims had become apostates (*murtad*). It is such unfounded claims which lead many to become angry and even militant.

"But when the lies are exposed, those who create them scurry into hiding, not even attempting to rectify the situation or to calm things down."

On the country's economic transformation, he said this could not happen overnight as it was not as simple as cooking

"We succeeded in the last 20 years because China and India had not yet emerged and Vietnam had not opened up.

"Today, competition is much fiercer. We can no longer offer ourselves as the factory of the world on the basis of cheap labour," he noted.

On complaints over the slow FDI, he said Malaysia was not open to mergers and acquisitions.

"We can increase the FDI figures many times over at the stroke of the pen, but it will mean some loss of control. If I

do that, you will be the first to condemn me. As long as Allah gives me guidance and strength, I will not seek to gamble away our inheritance in search of hollow victories."

Instead of "quick fixes," he said the Government would focus on transforming the economy in more sustainable ways.

"When the sun rises on 2020, Malaysians should no longer be identified as poor or backward. We must not pass on poverty and backwardness as an inheritance for future generations."