

British DPM seeks our tips

PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia's experience in administering a multi-racial and multi-religious country has got the British Government interested in learning the secret of creating a peaceful and harmonious society.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said his British counterpart John Prescott had expressed interest in knowing how the Government had made Islam the nation's official religion and how it was administered.

Najib said Prescott was also interested to know about relations between Muslims and those practising other religions, as this was now an important issue in the United Kingdom.

"Deputy Prime Minister Prescott is also personally interested in interfaith dialogue and we are happy to share our experiences in creating a peaceful and harmonious environment," he said.

Najib and Prescott held a joint press conference after bilateral talks at the Deputy Prime Minister's official residence, Sri Satria, yesterday. Najib also

hosted a lunch for Prescott, who was here for a four-day visit, which ended yesterday.

Najib said he and Prescott had discussed current issues, especially bilateral ties, and both leaders agreed that Kuala Lumpur and London were enjoying good relations.

"We also agreed that efforts must be made to further boost ties, particularly in areas of investment, commerce and trade as well as tourism, as we will be hosting the Visit Malaysia Year in 2007," he said.

"We also spoke on the control and conservation of the environment following the Kyoto Protocol."

The North Korean nuclear test was also discussed.

Asked if having the Internal Security Act had helped in maintaining religious and racial harmony in Malaysia, Najib said one should not look at the issue from a single dimension and it was not just about having an instrument like the ISA that had helped maintain peace here.

"It is the whole plethora of structures and instruments, en-

compassing our policies since day one, that contributed towards the peace and harmony that we enjoy today," he said.

Prescott also shared Najib's view, saying if one knew Malaysia, one would know that good racial relations had been in existence for a long time and that good understanding among the different races was the reason for it.

"It is also important to understand each other's argument and I shall go back with that very much in mind."

Prescott said constant dialogue and communication was important for a better understanding of each others' religion.

"Sometimes in secular states, we don't quite understand how Islam and Muslims look at a particular problem and we should understand that," he added.

"That is why exchanges are important. Every society has its concerns and we need to know how it deals and lives with these concerns."

• **Uncovering the veil problem**
-P17