

Abdul Ghani draws flak for remark

'HIS COMMENT THAT BANGSA MALAYSIA IS UNACCEPTABLE IS PUTTING DOWN BN'S FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF INTEGRATION'

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PETALING JAYA: Johor Umno chairman Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman's comment that *Bangsa Malaysia* is unacceptable has drawn much criticism from other Barisan Nasional (BN) component parties and the Opposition.

They said the comment was putting down the ruling coalition's fundamental principle of integration and unity among the different component parties.

Some acknowledged they preferred the term *Rakyat* than *Bangsa Malaysia*, but pointed out that semantics aside, the concept was crucial to reflect the multi-cultural make-up of Malaysian society.

For Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak (*pix*), *Bangsa Malaysia* is a general concept and "state mind".

"It does not need to be defined in detail," he said, adding that there was no need to amend the constitution for this purpose.

Najib, who is also Umno deputy president, said he was

more inclined towards a general understanding of the concept

"I like to stress that it is more towards a state of the mind, meaning that we lose the prejudice, incompatibility among the races, and unwillingness to mix with other races," he told a news conference after closing the two-day Johor Umno Convention in Johor Baru yesterday.

"If we treat it as a state of the mind," I think we can avoid the polemics. And if we try to define it, it will raise a

lot of questions and debates on the matter,"

Bernama quoted him as saying.

In his policy speech at the Johor Umno convention on Sunday, Abdul Ghani reportedly described the *Bangsa Malaysia* concept as a "*rojak*" of races, which was unacceptable.

He said Umno Johor was against the idea and that there was no need to reinvent a national identity as the constitution has clearly defined the different races who are

citizens of Malaysia.

He said that if subjected to abuse, the concept could pose a threat to national stability.

"Even if the term *Bangsa Malaysia* is to be used, it must only be applied in the context of all the peoples of Malaysia with the Malays as the pivotal race," he was quoted as saying.

Abdul Ghani also questioned the government's meritocracy system, saying it was a form of discrimination and oppression for the Malays.

He said it was impossible to strive for

meritocracy in the absence of equal opportunities for education for rural and urban Malays.

According to Bernama yesterday, the Malaysian race issue emerged recently when several parties claimed that the idea could strengthen racial unity in the country as the various races learn to respect one another's differences and similarities.

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