

We want to learn from you: Prescott

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PUTRAJAYA: British Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott said his government would like to learn how Malaysia maintains inter-faith relations in its multiracial society.

He said that with the current problems in the world, especially between the Muslims and Christians in Britain, there was much to learn about inter-faith relations from Malaysia.

He was speaking at a joint press conference with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at Najib's official residence, Sri Satria, after they met yesterday. Prescott was on a three-day official visit to Malaysia.

Asked by a foreign reporter if Malaysia was peaceful and safe because it had the Internal Security Act (ISA), Prescott

said he did not think Malaysia depended on the act.

"I think there is really community relations here over a long period of time. It is probably because of that reason, they have good harmony here," he said.

"I think it is wrong to just emphasise the ISA legislation."

Najib echoed Prescott's view. "The thing here is about the whole structure and instrument that we have in place. This has contributed to the peace and harmony that we enjoy today," he said.

Commenting on the debate over Muslim women using the veil and the importance of inter-faith understanding, Prescott said secular states sometimes "don't quite understand how Muslims and Christians look at this particular

problem".

He said there was a need to address this through better inter-faith understanding.

"At the end of the day, it's when you ignore them and don't take action...[that] brings about all these difficulties," he said.

At the meeting that lasted about an hour, the two leaders also discussed the Kyoto Protocol and the developments in North Korea, but did not, disclose details of the discussion at the press conference.