

PM: No ban on inter-faith dialogues

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THE move to prevent sensitive issues, especially those linked to religion, from being raised should not be equated to a ban on conducting inter-faith dialogue, the Prime Minister said.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said inter-faith dialogue was encouraged at all levels.

However, the ban on raising sensitive religious issues was to preserve inter-community harmony and unity.

"The decision (to ban) was taken after certain quarters raised sensitive religious issues until it caused controversy and worries among the people of various faiths," he said in a written reply to Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timur).

Abdullah said the media had also been advised not to raise sensitive issues which could cause hardship and bring negative effects to the people.

He said to enhance religious

understanding, Malaysians had held inter-faith dialogues from time to time.

He said since there were now various avenues to discuss and exchange views, efforts to have such dialogues would be encouraged.

"The government will encourage Islamic experts from Jakim (Islamic Development Department) and Ikim (Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia) to participate in inter-faith dialogues."

Additionally, the Religious Committee under the Unity Advisory Work Panel of the National Unity and Integration Department will hold inter-faith dialogues to enhance harmony among religious communities.

Abdullah added that the committee would emphasise on issues such as crime prevention, abuse of drugs and other social issues that required the co-operation of the various communities.