

Abdullah: Stop activities on inter-faith issue

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KUALA LUMPUR: All activities relating to the formation of the Inter-Faith Commission should cease immediately as the religious tension in the country has reached a worrying level, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said last night.

The Prime Minister said the Cabinet had already decided to postpone the setting up of the commission.

"I don't know why this group of people have to carry out activities related to it. It is creating unnecessary problems. The Government will, in the near future, make an announcement on the Inter-Faith Commission," he added.

Abdullah, who is also the Internal Security Minister, reminded the people that religious issues were very sensitive.

"They evoke emotions. When discussed openly, and without control, they create anger, and this leads to unwanted situations."

He said Umno was worried about the current situation, where the issue of religion was being hotly debated by various parties.

"We have to be careful and be moderate so as not to create a situation where people from various faiths get all tensed up," he said.

Abdullah, who was speaking to reporters after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting, was commenting on the Article 11 forum in Johor Baru recently that was disrupted by a few thousand



Abdullah (right) and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak at the Press conference yesterday.

people, including members from Umno Youth and Pas.

On the drug menace, Abdullah said the supreme council members had decided that Umno, through its drug prevention bureau, would champion the nation's struggle in checking the problem.

"This is an important programme, and it is our responsibility to deal with the matter as the number of addicts among young Bumiputeras is very high.

"This is a great loss because these young Bumiputeras could

have been part of the nation's human capital to contribute in the nation's development.

"Instead, many of these youngsters, who do not seem to have strong willpower, have succumbed to: drugs and are languishing at the Serenti centres. This is a great loss to the Malays, especially."

Abdullah, who is the Umno president, said the party's supreme council had called for an immediate ceasefire in Lebanon.

"We are gravely concerned, upset and angry with what is hap-

pening in Lebanon, There is disproportionate, indiscriminate and excessive use of force by Israel in Lebanon," he said.

"Many innocent civilians are suffering, and more than one million people displaced following the escalating violence."

Malaysia was ready to send a peace-keeping team to Lebanon if the UN imposed a ceasefire, he added.

Abdullah said the party's membership drive had attracted 85,296 applications, with Terengganu topping the list with 19,892.