

# PM supports code of ethics for MPs

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SEPANG: A code of ethics for Members of Parliament — which, among other things, will spell out how far they can go in helping their constituents — is coming closer to being a reality.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, on his return from abroad yesterday, threw his weight behind the proposal to form a committee to draw up the guidelines, which would be applicable to all MPs.

He said while it would be beneficial to have ethical guidelines for MPs when dealing with issues of government, such restrictions might also cause problems in serving their constituents.

"There is good in having such a committee to frame some rules for the MPs, and they should apply to all MPs, not just from the Barisan Nasional but also the Opposition.

"We will have to consider the finer points of the proposal to see the benefits and problems that could arise from such rules. But for a start, it looks like it will bring about some good," Abdullah told reporters at Kuala Lumpur International Airport yesterday on arrival from Austin, Texas, where he had attended the World Congress on Information Technology.

The committee to formulate ethical guidelines for MPs was suggested by Johor Baru MP Datuk Shahrir Samad to Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak on Friday.

Shahrir made the proposal after he resigned as Backbenchers' Club chairman for not getting the support of fellow BN MPs for an Opposition motion in Parliament.

The motion involved a *New Straits Times* report of an MP in-



Abdullah believes there would be value in having a committee to frame guidelines for MPs.

terfering with the Malacca Customs office by asking for "leniency" for one of his constituents.

Asked if party rules would be amended to allow MPs to vote by conscience and principle rather than party lines, Abdullah said it was a party decision not to allow any MP to support an Opposition motion.

"We intend to maintain this decision. It is the principle of showing support for the party. A party decision is also a principle and must be followed," he said.

Shahrir is to explain his resignation at the Umno supreme council meeting today. Abdullah said although Shahrir had resigned, he would allow him to

raise his concerns at the meeting.

"I won't prevent him from giving an explanation. Even though what happened is related to Parliament, it also has to do with the party principle of not supporting an Opposition motion. Maybe he wants to raise this."

Abdullah added that Najib, as the BN Whip, had made the right decision in accepting Shahrir's resignation.

"It was in line with the party's rules," he said.

Asked about Jasin MP Datuk Mohd Said Yusof, who owned up to being the MP who interfered with the Malacca Customs office, Abdullah said Said's actions would be discussed within Umno.