

PM ticks off Sarawak Tribune

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PUTRAJAYA, Tues. — Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today ticked off the *Sarawak Tribune* for publishing the controversial caricatures of Prophet Muhammad.

“I am surprised,” he said. “They didn’t think things through. They have been irresponsible as they know this kind of action can lead to ill-feeling.”

Speaking after the Internal Security Ministry’s monthly assembly here, the Prime Minister said that while the concept of Press freedom was respected in this country, newspapers should be careful on sensitive issues such as religion and race.

“Be it about Islam, Hinduism or any other religion, these issues must be treated carefully.

“We have seen the repercussions of such actions and yet the newspaper reproduced them.”

Muslim anger worldwide was stoked after the cartoons were published in a Danish newspaper last September.

The cartoons were subsequently reprinted by the media in other European countries, the United States and elsewhere — sometimes to illustrate stories about the controversy, but also in support of free speech.

The *Sarawak Tribune* on Saturday reprinted one of the offending cartoons. In a joint statement by its editorial committee, the daily later apologised and said the reprint resulted from an “oversight” on the part of the editor on duty.

The editor has since resigned.

Abdullah, who is also Internal Security Minister, urged Malaysians to show restraint when showing their displeasure over the publication of the cartoons.

He said the Government had no plans to boycott Danish products, and asked the public not to jam the telephone lines of the Danish embassy here.

Instead, if they had to make their feelings known, they should submit a protest note to the embassy.

“Let us focus on getting our message across without causing problems to others,” Abdullah said.

He said the nation’s media were aware of their responsibilities and the need to be sensitive in a multiracial and multi-religious populace.

Abdullah said unbridled freedom could well lead to chaos and suffering for everyone.