

PM: We'll listen to both sides on amendment

NST - 14/1/2006

INDIVIDUALS, particularly those affected directly, will be given an ear in fresh consultations that could lead to amendments of the controversial Islamic Family Law Act.

The order has gone out to the Attorney-General's chambers to hear out all interested parties on the matter — non-governmental organisations, women's groups and experts.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who said this yesterday, wants the issue to be resolved quickly.

"I hope the A-G would consult all the relevant parties, including individuals. And I have suggested that they call in the Islamic law experts to hear their views. They are important.

"We want to act fast to make the appropriate amendments to avoid the problem cropping up in the future," he told Malaysian journalists at a Press conference



at the end of the two-day annual bilateral consultation with Indonesian leaders.

The Act, among other things, appear to make it easier for Muslim men to take more than one wife and has spelled out certain regulations on the division of property upon divorce, which triggered a wave of protests from many Muslim women.

Despite it being passed by Parliament recently, the Cabinet decided two days ago not to gazette it, pending another round of discussions which could lead to amendments.

Abdullah said although the Act that was passed by Parliament was already the result of efforts

to strengthen the law, there were too many things raised afterwards that required a re-look.

On his meeting with Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his delegation, the Prime Minister said the obvious outcome was the increase in goodwill and mutual confidence.

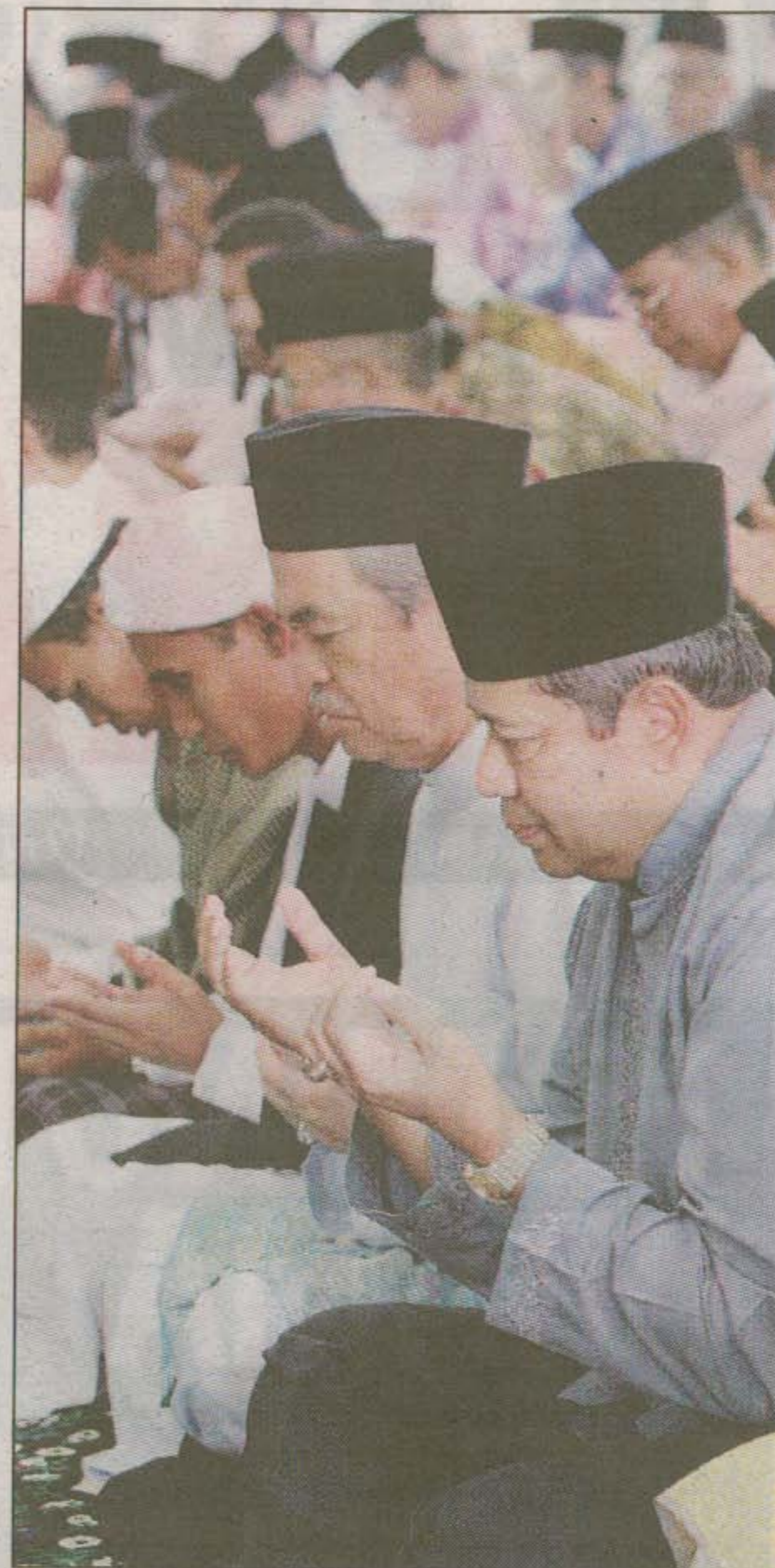
Abdullah said the inclusion of many ministers and senior officials in both delegations would go a long way towards ensuring that the two sides honoured their commitments.

"I brought along a big group so that they would know what was decided and the spirit behind the deliberations.

"This would make the implementation not only easier but more committed."

Abdullah earlier performed Friday prayers with Susilo at Masjid Jame Raya Bukit Tinggi.

The Prime Minister returned to Kuala Lumpur in the evening.



TOGETHER IN PRAYER: Abdullah and Susilo (right) attending Friday prayers at a mosque in Bukit Tinggi. — AFP picture