

# Forum okay ...

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## but be careful, says Pak Lah

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The public forum in Penang on the protection of minority rights under the Federal Constitution was legal and not banned but the organisers must be careful as their subject matter was sensitive, said Datuk

Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"The meeting was held in a closed door manner and it was their right to discuss the matter and what they talked about was not in contravention of any laws because at the end of the day the Government will decide on the matters."

>TURN TO PAGE 6

## Don't tread on dangerous grounds, says PM

> ROM PAGE 1

"But they (Article 11 group) must be careful not to make any sensitive statements or put pressure on the Government and make demands because this is bordering on the Sedition Act and action can be taken against them or anyone."

"Although it is a legitimate discussion, they must avoid treading on dangerous grounds and thus must exercise extreme caution to ensure that their discussions do not slight the feelings of other ethnic group's sentiments," the Prime Minister told reporters after opening the Smidec 2006 convention here yesterday.

Abdullah, who is also Internal Security Minister, was asked to comment on the protest by 500 members of the Anti-Inter Faith Commission Body (AIFCB) on Sunday against the forum entitled "Federal Constitution - Protection for All".

The forum was organised by Article 11, an umbrella group of 13 non-governmental organisations.

The Prime Minister said the protest should not have happened.

"However, the way the group stormed into the room where the meeting was held was rude and rough and what they did was not very nice," he added.

"The police could have taken drastic action but they handled the incident well and it was not true that police had cancelled the meeting. They only told the organisers to cut short the forum."

Abdullah said he had seen the report on the incident and that it was the correct move by the police to ask the organisers of the forum to end the meeting early to avoid any untoward incidents.

The prime minister also reiterated that the tense situation was proof enough of how things could go overboard, and added that such groups must understand the sentiments of other ethnic groups.

On the description by Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Abdul Aziz of the protest as a "stupid act", Abdullah said it was his choice of words.

In Penang, state police chief Deputy Comm Datuk Christopher Wan said action would be taken against AIFCB.

DCP Wan said police had identified the protesters, who were from a political party.

"My officers recorded the entire incident on videotape and we have already identified those involved. They will be called up soon to give their statements," he told a press conference yesterday.

He said a total of 123 police personnel were put on standby to prevent the protest from getting out of hand, and added that there was no malice in the police's actions that day.