

Najib: Stick to conventional ways

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MEET THE PEOPLE: Najib sharing a laugh with Pepet ak Pelangut (third from right) who was receiving a medical check-up from (R) Mejar Dr Asuhan Mohd Rashid at Kampung Padang Kota Perdana in Pekan yesterday.

PEKAN: All sensitive issues relating to race and religion should be discussed using conventional methods, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said.

"At Cabinet meetings, our non-Muslim colleagues can give their views on matters affecting their communities.

"Alternatively, they can meet or write to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"By adopting these methods, we can avoid negative perceptions or misinterpretation among the public," he told reporters after visiting an orang

asli settlement in Kampung Padang Kota Perdana yesterday.

He said the move by the nine ministers - who signed and submitted a memorandum asking the Prime Minister for a review of laws affecting the rights of non-Muslims - had created uneasiness among the people.

"Although their intention was noble, it could lead to a wrong interpretation," Najib had said earlier in the day before the ministers made the move to retract the memorandum.

In Ipoh, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Tajol Rosli

Ghazali said that any comments in the press would only worsen the situation.

"If we make statements and discuss the matter in the newspapers, it could be blown out of proportion," he said.

He urged Barisan Nasional leaders in Perak to refrain from making statements and leave it to the leaders of the BN component parties to sort out the matter.

In Putrajaya, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdullah Md Zin said issues pertaining to religion and race must be handled delicately and with sensitivity.

In Kangar, Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said the Prime Minister's statement that there will be no amendment to Article 121(1A) of the Federal Constitution which relates to the powers of the Syariah court should end the polemic on the matter.

On the ministers who submitted the memorandum, he said: "As politicians they wear many dresses - as ministers, the people's elected representatives and as citizens. But being ministers, they cannot simply change their dress and criticise the Government. It is against government ethics."