

Be careful with sensitive issues, says Abdullah

The Sun - 17/5/2006

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday advised organisers of the Inter-Faith Forum to be careful in their discussion so as not to cause tension.

The prime minister said that issues discussed at the forum are sensitive and can cause conflict if not handled properly.

“Don’t make calls that can precipitate a bad situation in our country. Such matters are very sensitive and we must be careful,” he told reporters after launching the Smidex 2006 exhibition and SME Asean +3 Convention here.

Asked to comment on the protest which disrupted a forum on civil liberties in Penang on Sunday, he said the incident was an example of a situation that could cause tension, and caution must be exercised.

The protest by 500 members of the Anti Inter-Faith Commission Body was against the forum organised by Article 11, an umbrella group of 13 non-governmental organisations, to reaffirm that Malaysia is a secular state according to the Federal Constitution and to discuss the jurisdiction of the civil courts.

Abdullah, who is also the internal security minister, said police did not cancel the forum as claimed but only asked the organisers to break off early to prevent any untoward incident, Bernama reports.

Asked to comment on the forum, the third in a series after Kuala Lumpur and Malacca, he said there are no plans to ban it as it is not against the law.

However, action would be taken against anyone who makes seditious statements and threatens the peace, he said.

“It is our practice to be cautious, moderate in whatever we do and we don’t want to raise sentiments that can precipitate fights, conflicts and so forth,” Abdullah said.

“We must not forget, but sometimes we do. We get carried away by our sentiments and that’s the problem.

“And when a problem occurs, it’s difficult to remedy the situation if sentiments have already been fired up.”

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