

Don't abuse freedom of expression, warns PM

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BUKIT MERTAJAM: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has warned against the exploitation of freedom of expression to cause unrest in the country.

Abdullah said that while he had given much leeway for people to convey their views, it should not be abused.

"The people can talk about many things but it should be done wisely. If this is not appreciated, everything will be lost," he said in his speech during the Program Mesra Rakyat (People-Friendly Programme) held at the Tuanku Bainun Teaching Institute here.

Present were Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdul Rashid Abdullah.

The prime minister called for a stop to the polemic of whether Malaysia was an Islamic or secular country.

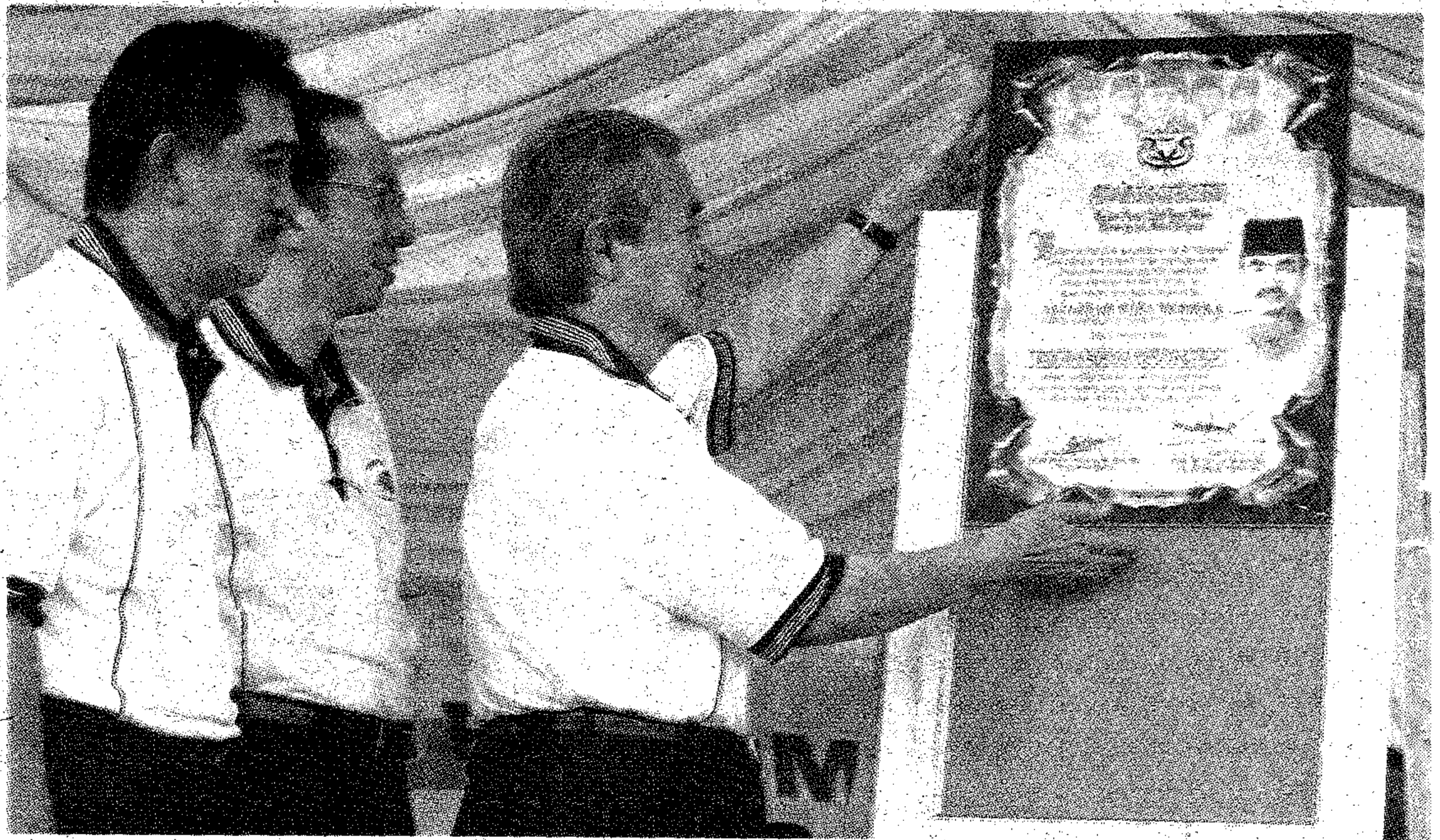
He said Malaysia was not a secular or theocratic country but one which was based on parliamentary democracy.

He said the government never marginalised any minority group or religion and that religious diversity in the country had never been a problem.

"This diversity is not a liability but is actually what makes us strong.

"We have always given attention to every group and our leadership is based on the consensus of all races."

The prime minister added this was what made Malaysia a unique country.



Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi hanging a Permatang Pauh Merdeka Heroes plaque during the People-Friendly programme. With him are Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Permatang Pauh Umno division chief Datuk Abdul Jalil Abdul Majid (left).

Abdullah said the bigger ethnic group had never suppressed the smaller groups and this had contributed to the country's continued peace and prosperity.

"We should all be thankful that our efforts to develop the country have never been derailed since we

achieved independence.

"The government has always been able to carry through all development projects thanks to the people's continued support for the Barisan Nasional since the time the coalition was known as the Alliance."

Earlier, Koh called on the people to continue working and sharing together under the BN leadership, which had brought growth to the nation.

He said only by doing so would the nation attain peace, stability and progress.