

Neither secular nor theocratic

The Star - 5/8/2007

By **DERRICK VINESH**

derrickvinesh@thestar.com.my

BUKIT MERTAJAM: Malaysia is not a secular state and neither is it a theocratic state, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Reiterating that Malaysia is a multiracial nation that observes freedom of religious practice, the Prime Minister said:

"We are a government that is based on parliamentary democracy; a government that is responsible to the parliament and the people.

"It is a government that is made up of

Malaysian situation is unique, says PM

Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and Christians, who work together and discuss together development policies for the nation."

He said the Government gave due attention to all races, who enjoy religious freedom as provided for in the Constitution.

"Be it a *surau*, *masjid*, temple or church, when there is a need for it, the Government gives the necessary aid," he told a mass gathering at the Tuanku Bainun Teachers Training College in

Mengkuang here yesterday.

"Secular nations do not practise such freedom. To them, religious practice can only be done at home," he said, responding to critics who claimed that the Government advocates secularism. Abdullah said the country's multi-ethnic and multireligious compositions had never been a problem to Malaysians.

"This diversity has enabled us to live in peace and harmony. Let us continue with our

own unique Malaysian way," he said.

The Prime Minister said the country had progressed with its unique formula for 50 years and was now successful.

"I do not see why such a government cannot progress in the years to come," he said.

In a tribute to the country's founding fathers, Abdullah said they had fought for the nation's independence but their struggles must be continued through the present generation.

The current struggle was to eradicate poverty and prejudiced feelings that could derail the nation's unity, he added.