

Bloggers not immune to laws, says Abdullah

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KUANTAN: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday warned those who spread lies on the Internet that they were not spared from the country's laws.

He said Internet users, particularly bloggers, would face legal action if they broke the law, such as by smearing Islam and the institution of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.

Bloggers and other Internet posters "do not have the freedom to do whatever they like", he said at a press conference before attending the wedding of a Seri Perdana staff member in Kampung Balok near here.

"It is not for them to claim that they are immune from the law simply because their websites are hosted overseas where they have the right to say anything."

Abdullah said the law was the same for everyone and those who produced news and commentary were bound by their responsibili-

ties under the country's legislation.

"Do not go to the extent of smearing the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and Islam because these are not matters which can be taken lightly, where anyone can say whatever he likes."

Abdullah said the government would leave it to the police to investigate such violations.

The prime minister's comment came in the wake of police questioning of Raja Petra Kamarudin on Wednesday following a report lodged by Umno.

Raja Petra, whose *Malaysia Today* website allegedly contained insulting postings against the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and Islam, had claimed that no action could be taken against him as the website was registered overseas.

Abdullah also expressed relief that graft investigations into Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan and former Anti-Corruption-Agency (ACA) director Datuk Seri Zulkifli Mat Noor had been concluded.

"I am glad that both of them have been cleared of any wrong-

doing," he said.

"When news came out that there were allegations of corruption against them, both Zulkifli and Musa told me they were ready to co-operate and facilitate investigations against them."

Abdullah said Musa had, for instance, immediately handed over the investigation against him to the ACA as he felt the police could be accused of bias if it conducted the probe.

The prime minister hoped the matter would no longer be debated following the closure of investigations by Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail on Friday.

On calls for the Child Act to be amended, Abdullah said he agreed on the urgency to correct the defects in its provisions.

Several quarters have called for the amendment following a Court of Appeal decision on Wednesday to release a teenager found guilty of murder while he was a minor four years ago.

"The Child Act needs to be studied so that there will be no shortcomings in the delivery of justice by the courts," Abdullah said.

"In this case, he (the teenager) was found guilty but there was no provision stressed by the law for him to be punished."

Asked on a possible year-end bonus for civil servants, Abdullah said he would wait for a report from Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop.

"A bonus is not something we are obliged to pay. It is not the civil servants' right to get one. This is unlike their salary to which they are entitled."

As for the unfilled post of Chief Judge of Malaya, Abdullah said he had proposed a candidate and it was now for the Chief Justice to conclude the appointment.

The last Chief Judge of Malaya, Tan Sri Siti Norma Yaakob, retired on Jan 5.

Asked on the possibility of him announcing the date of the next general election soon, Abdullah said it was not yet the time to do so despite the mounting speculation.

"Let them talk all they want. There is nothing wrong with that. It is actually quite amusing to hear all sorts of stories whenever an election is near."