

Pak Lah thanks media

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PM: It has been responsible and co-operative with Govt

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian media has been responsible and co-operative with the Government in reporting events that could threaten the country's peace and unity, the Prime Minister said.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the media had been conscientious when reporting racially and religiously sensitive issues because it had an understanding with the Government on the greater need to protect the peace and stability the people enjoyed.

Abdullah, who said the complementary role was vital, added that the media had helped create a stable environment, boost patriotism and forge unity in the country especially during crises and problems.

He said history had proven this and cited the country's struggle for independence, the communist insurgency, confrontation with Indonesia, May 13 riots and political crises that could have seriously affected the country's future.

"Otherwise, we would have a chaotic situation and uncertainties beyond our control. To be frank, the media is still responsible and I thank you so much," he said when addressing the Mass Media Conference 2007 organised by the Internal Security Ministry.

Abdullah, who is also Internal Security Minister, admitted that at times, the Government sought the media's assistance in issues that might spark off racial and religious discord among the people.

He added that in this era, news could be disseminated in an instant



Friendly greeting: Abdullah shaking hands with Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan after launching the conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

and sometimes the issues caused people to react based on their feelings.

Likewise, media practitioners also felt compelled to write commentaries on what they perceived to be the situation, Abdullah said.

"At times the commentaries disregarded the general feelings of the people and their value for unity and harmony," he said.

He said news stories, analysis and criticisms including those that were highlighted as "human interest stories" could influence people who read, watch television or had access to the Internet.

Abdullah said those in authority, including in the newsroom, must have a sense of timing.

"Editors-in-chief and media own-

ers decide what to play up or leave out. Perhaps they need to have a 'internal' guideline, a reminder to themselves, on what to highlight, spike or blow up," he said.

Abdullah added that like the country, the media was undergoing a maturing process and it existed in a situation where Malaysia was facing various forms of challenges, global and domestic.

"Sometimes, the media has anxiety in deciding what it should do but I believe they wonder how the Government, or specifically Pak Lah or the Internal Security Ministry, would react (to a news item).

"But some people also think 'Pak Lah is tolerant so let's try and see how tolerant he is'," he said.

He also reminded the media that there were laws that governed them.

"Whether we use them depends on the situation. Even if we don't use them, we leave it there. When we discipline our children we don't throw away the cane even if we don't use it but hang it up as a reminder to them," Abdullah said.

■ See StarOnline for the full text of Abdullah's speech.



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