

Stop public bickering, PM tells Johari, cops

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KUALA LUMPUR: Stop the bickering.

A visibly upset prime minister yesterday criticised Deputy Internal Security Minister Datuk Johari Baharum and the police for having a shouting match in public.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi also lashed out at the chairman and director-general of the Malaysian Fisheries Development Authority (LKIM) for their public quarrel over allegations of corruption.

He told them to stop quarrelling in public and sort out their grievances internally.

The prime minister also expressed anger over the temporary closure of the Immigration headquarters in Putrajaya following a burst pipe on Wednesday.

Abdullah, who is also internal security minister, said: "They should sit down and resolve the matter among themselves. Not talk to the media and make it public. This will only aggravate the situation and make the public lose confidence in the government."

He said he had asked the parties concerned to furnish him with details of their allegations and counter-allegations so that he could ascertain the truth of the matter.

Abdullah was referring to news reports about the spat between Johari and the police and that between LKIM chairman Adam Abdul Hamid and director-general Datuk Annas Khatib Jaafar.

Johari had, on Wednesday, taken the police to task for refuting the crime rate figures he had given, saying that this would confuse the public.

Johari subsequently summoned Federal CID director Datuk Christopher Wan Soo Kee to his office to explain why police refuted him. Police yesterday stood their ground.

Adam had earlier said he had lodged a report with the ACA over alleged corruption involving the top management of LKIM.

On Wednesday, Annas Khatib counter-claimed that the LKIM management had lodged a report with the ACA against Adam, who is also chairman of Majuikan Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of LKIM.

If this public bickering was not enough, the inconvenience caused to 3,000 people by the one-day closure of the Immigration headquarters was simply too much for the prime minister.

Abdullah said: "I am very unhappy. In fact, I am very angry as to how a newly completed building can sustain such damage."

"I want to know what the defect



Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is also angry that a newly completed building like the Immigration headquarters in Putrajaya can sustain such damage.

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is and if any misappropriation took place.

"I have asked the Public Works Department to thoroughly investigate the matter, including the construction aspects."

The prime minister was speaking to newsmen after opening the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency Academy in Persiaran Duta yesterday.

Abdullah said the PWD was not responsible for the construction of the building which was contracted out to a private company by Putrajaya Holdings.

"This most likely appears to be a maintenance issue. We must take care to ensure there is regular and scheduled maintenance of buildings.

"There clearly is a weakness here. If a small defect is left unattended, it can result in a catastrophe," he said.

Operations at the Immigration headquarters were suspended af-

ter a pipe joint dislodged on the seventh floor — where the director-general's office is located — resulting in water spilling down to the lower floors.

The 2am incident resulted in more than 3,000 people being referred to Immigration branch offices for transactions after electricity supply to the headquarters was cut off to prevent short circuits.

On the appointment of a new ACA director-general to replace Datuk Seri Zulkipli Mat Noor, Abdullah said he was waiting for a detailed list of the candidates.

"As this is an important post, I want to study the background of the candidates before making the right choice," he said.

Zulkipli, whose contract upon retirement was not renewed on March 31, is embroiled in a controversy following investigations into allegations of corruption and abuse of power.

ACA deputy director-general (I) Datuk Ahmad Said Hamdan is the acting director-general.

On news reports in the *Japan Times* of alleged corruption involving a top Sarawak politician, Abdullah said he had not received any report on the matter.

"I am not sure of the facts, as they are only media reports. If it's true, we will carry out an investigation," Abdullah said.

Earlier in his speech, Abdullah said public cynicism and apathy were the biggest enemy of the anti-corruption agenda.

He called on agencies concerned to work together to ensure the system was not sluggish, resulting in trial by the media and justice not being served.

"The government has identified capacity-building and the implementation of preventive and punitive measures as part of the anti-corruption strategy," he said.

There were 1,317 cases involving corruption last year, compared with 663 cases in 2001.

"There is a 77 per cent increase in arrests of those involved in corruption, from 318 in 2001 to 564 last year.

"Even the conviction rate has increased from below 50 per cent several years ago to 74 per cent last year," he said.

Abdullah added that since last year the academy had conducted 26 courses for more than 900 officers.