

# PM: We support sanctions against errant members

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**MALAYSIA** supports the introduction of sanctions against errant Asean members as part of proposed changes to give the regional grouping more clout, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"I have no problem with that provision. If Asean is to survive and become a rules-based organisation, there has to be some monitoring and action whenever there is a departure from established principles," he said.

The sanction proposal is contained in the Eminent Persons' Group (EPG) report presented to the Asean leaders on Friday. It was seen as one of the more sensitive provisions, given Asean's tradition of non-interference and consensus.

Speaking at a Press conference yesterday, Abdullah said Malaysia considered the EPG report a major highlight of the 12th Asean Summit, held here until tomorrow, as it provided the basis for the creation of an Asean Charter.

"The process of Asean integration is taking place. We are getting deeper into it. In dealings with one another, we have more understanding of the issues that impact us individually and as a group."

On the reaction from other Asean leaders to the proposed sanctions, Abdullah said some were against it, while others questioned the mechanisms for deciding sanctions.

"Will it be by consensus, show of hands or a majority vote? These need to be discussed further," he said.

A High-Level Task Force (HLTF) will use the EPG report and input from the Asean leaders to draft the Asean Charter, which will be presented at the next Asean Summit in Singapore in December.

"There was no serious opposition to any of the proposals (in the EPG report). Views were expressed and there were differences in opinions."

"I have made my views known and these will be taken into account by the HLTF. We would like to have the Asean Charter because it spells



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says Asean is moving deeper towards integration. — AP picture

out what we want to achieve in the future," Abdullah said.

Asked whether he believed all Asean members could reach an agreement on the EPG proposals, given the political and economic differences among members, the prime minister replied: "That is what we call unity in diversity. I think we can. It depends on how detailed the document will be."

Other proposals include majority voting in non-controversial areas, such as economic co-operation and crises management, a bian-

nual summit and a greater role for the secretary-general.

On China and Russia's move to veto an American resolution calling on Myanmar's military government to release all political prisoners and speed up progress towards democracy, Abdullah said the decision was a matter of principle.

"The situation in Myanmar is not a security issue that will have an impact on the region. It is not a matter for the United Nations Security Council but other forums."