

PM: Non-Muslims not marginalised

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia has not marginalised its non-Muslim citizens as all of them practise their religions freely, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

In an interview with BBC World's *Special Edition Asia Today* programme yesterday, Abdullah said freedom of religion is guaranteed under the

constitution.

"At the same time, we don't marginalise them (non-Muslims). They participate in the government. We have a power-sharing government. (We share the power) among Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and Christians," he said.

He said this when the programme's host, Zeinab Badawi, told him that some non-Muslims in Malaysia said they were getting uncomfortable with the aggressive

advancement of Islam.

Abdullah said the government had acted "very fast" against some Islamic extremists in the country by educating them or even putting them under detention.

In the 11-minute interview, Abdullah appeared evasive when asked about his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's scathing criticism against him.

"It's his right to say what he wants. I have a

government to run. I have to do what I think is possible to do," he said.

Abdullah said the the economy is "better now" and that the Ninth Malaysia Plan, which was launched in April, had gained increasing momentum.

"Maybe we are a bit slow, that's why he (Mahathir) was getting impatient," he said.

To another question whether he had the appetite to run in the next

general elections, due to be held in 2009, he said: "Well, I think so (chuckle), I think so. There is a lot of work to be done."

On the programme, aired live from Abdullah's suite at Dorchester Hotel in London, he said Islam had to be understood, especially by the West.

"I've been saying very often that Islam doesn't compromise terrorism and we've said it all the time," he said.