

'We are on a ship. If it leaks, we sink'

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■ **By Shamini Darshni**
darshni@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: All races should compete in good faith without resorting to extremism, which will not be tolerated, the prime minister said.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said "friendly competition" would make sure that no one was sidelined in development.

"All will be developed even though there are differences. Everyone wants to do well. What's wrong with that?" he said yesterday.

Although Barisan Nasional component parties represented individual races, each should always bear in mind the interests of others.

"Then our people and our country will be safe," Abdullah, who is also BN chairman, said at the 61st MIC general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

He said Malaysia rejected ex-

tremism in any form. "Moderation must be our trademark."

Commenting on MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu's speech, he said he hoped that while the MIC championed the Indian community's advancement, it would also consider the ambitions of the Chinese and Malays.

"While we want the nation to progress, we don't want any race to lag behind. This is important and must be our norm, a reminder to us forever.

"I feel happy when I hear party leaders thinking about their people. Perhaps they think that way because they are afraid of being left behind. There is competition among races but we cannot concentrate on our race alone.

"When I think about it, there must be those in our own communities who are worried.

"But as your leader, who is close to the heads of the component parties, I see their attitudes when we discuss cabinet matters or oth-

er issues, even those involving race and religion.

"All of us, I assure you, discuss these issues with full responsibility to ensure harmony and good relations. Mutual respect is observed," he said.

Abdullah, like Samy Vellu, said he wondered about the fate of Malaysians 50 years on. "To build a future, we need a long-term plan. We work not only during elections, but for the long term."

On the Ijok by-election where BN fielded MIC candidate K. Parthiban, he said there were lessons to be learned.

He said if people thought along racial or religious lines, the MIC candidate would not have won.

"Race or religion is not an excuse to think and act blindly."

He said that ethnic and religious diversity was a strength which "teaches us to always be careful before we act".

"We are all on a ship. If it leaks, we will all sink."