

# Malaysia is for all races

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IT was clearly a message from his heart: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi struck a chord when he made a passionate plea to Malaysians to mend fences and to remain united.

What the Prime Minister has said is certainly timely, particularly as we make preparations to celebrate the country's 50th year of independence.

All the parades and celebrations would have little meaning if Malaysians do not appreciate, let alone understand, the meaning of independence.

We must have the mood to celebrate National Day. Let no one say there is none because we have plenty of reasons to celebrate.

Unlike the independence of other countries, Malaysians achieved theirs without shedding any blood.

That is simply because we have always believed in the politics of consensus and moderation. That means no one race will have their way 100% and, so far, the leadership has carried that well.

Our founding fathers recognised that compromise was a strength and not a weakness.

No doubt we can do better and, as Pak Lah said, race relations is still fragile and brittle. Certainly, we all agree that more must be done for the sake of the country, especially the future generation.

All of us must work on it. It does not just involve ordinary Malaysians - our politicians must be equally responsible.

Irrespective of their positions, they must be accountable for their actions and what they say. Politicians cannot preach national unity and at the same time make racist statements that hurt the feelings of fellow Malaysians.

Whether they are from the rul-



ing parties or the Opposition, politicians must learn to restrain themselves from raising communal issues.

The same applies to civil servants, religious leaders and non-government organisations that try to exert their influence on us.

They must emulate Pak Lah if they genuinely support him and his model of politics, as he has always been consistent.

He enjoys telling his friends of his childhood days as a boy scout at the Bukit Mertajam High School in Penang where he met boys from other races.

His scoutmaster was a Chinese teacher who taught him what leadership and team spirit was all about. Certainly he played a part, whether big or small, in moulding the character of Pak Lah.

National Day, as the Prime Minister said, should not be celebrated by just one race but by every Malaysian.

That is simply because Malaysia belongs to all races. It is what it is today because of the hard work of all races.

We have put in our share of toil and no race should be made to feel that he does not belong here. There are no more immigrant races because we are Malaysians.

In the words of Pak Lah, we must be united as Malaysians to take on the world. Time is not on our side.

The petty squabbles have sapped much of our energy. That has to stop. We need to catch up in this highly competitive world that

does not tolerate the mediocre and those who are not prepared to fight the economic battles.

We have to worry about the Chinese, the Indians, the Indonesians and Vietnamese. And we have to remind the Americans that we exist and that we are in the game too.

Yes, we are a small nation, just

in case we get carried away with our *Malaysia Boleh* spirit.

Malaysians have had enough bad news. It is surely time for some feel-good news again and all of us must aim for that by playing our part.

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