

# Abdullah: Take care when dealing with race, religion

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Malaysians have been reminded to be extra careful in dealing with racial and religious issues.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who issued this reminder, said: "Race and religious issues are still very sensitive issues. We shouldn't be too alarmed but at the same time, it must serve as a lesson to us."

He was referring to people's unhappiness with speakers who touched on religious issues at the last Umno General Assembly, which was televised live.

However, Abdullah who was at the UN Association of Malaysia dinner here last night, said only three of 22 speakers touched on sensitive matters and it

could not be regarded as the position of Umno.

"Malays react to anything that touch on their position or religious matters," he said, adding that this was why he explained the social contracts and the party's commitment to the Barisan Nasional.

Abdullah also said that the UN should convene a special conference to address the widening schism between the Christian West and the Muslim world.

"At the strategic level, the Muslim world sees the suppression of Palestine, the invasion of Afghanistan, the conquest of Iraq and the destruction of Lebanon as a complicity to humiliate Muslim countries," he said.

"At the ideological level, they see the refusal of the Christian West to acknowledge Islam as a

way of life for all Muslims as intolerance and arrogance."

The West in general, Abdullah said, had allowed secularism to remove religion from the public domain into the confines of the home and family and expected Muslims to do the same, although this was against the teachings of Islam.

Abdullah also called on UN member states to work together with non-governmental organisations to generate political pressure to convince reluctant governments of the need to change the world organisation.

He reminded those who aspired to be the new permanent members of the UN Security Council to remember a caution by Abraham Lincoln that "nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man's character, give him power."

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