

# Government doing its best for Indians, says PM

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ALOR GAJAH: An outraged Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday blasted Hindraf's claims of the mistreatment of Malaysian Indians as lies intended to divide the races and destroy the country's peace.

"I rarely get angry but this time I am very angry and this is something I cannot accept," he said.

The prime minister took grave exception to a memorandum asking the British government to lead an international condemnation of Malaysia's "atrocities" against Indians.

"Hindraf is making baseless allegations and wants the United Kingdom to move an emergency United Nations resolution condemning ethnic cleansing in Malaysia.

"Tell me, do you believe there is ethnic cleansing in Malaysia? Is there ethnic cleansing, tell me? If this happened, I will resign," Abdullah said at a press conference after launching Kampung Tanjung Bidara as the country's second Islam Hadhari village.

"Tell me, you are an Indian and so are you (referring to Indian reporters), have we been doing it for the past 50 years, have we done this?" he asked.

"Malaysians would not believe it. Even the Indians who are Hindus do not believe it. Ethnic cleansing was perpetrated in Bosnia where the Serbs attacked the Bosnians to chase them out and make them non-existent. It was backed by the state. We do not do this here," he said.

Hindraf legal adviser P. Uthayakumar has resorted to the British before. In May 2004, he went to London to apply for asylum alleging police harassment in relation to a death-in-custody case he had taken up.

He returned to Malaysia about a month later after Tan Sri Musa Hassan, then the federal CID director and now inspector-general of police, advised him to substantiate his allegations.

Abdullah also slammed Hindraf's charge that "government-backed armed Islamic extremists" had destroyed a temple in Klang.

"There is no such thing. This is a lie conjured by certain groups to create hatred among the Indians for the government."

In its memorandum, Hindraf also appealed to the British government to refer Malaysia to the World Court and the International Criminal Court for "crimes against ethnic minority Indians".

Describing the Indian community as "innocent and good people", Abdullah said it had contributed to nation-building.

"They have done their part and

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Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi



supported the government. They are strong supporters of the Barisan Nasional and they surely do so because they believe we are fair to all."

Abdullah said the government was doing its best for the Indians and cited his experience in helping the community in his parliamentary constituency of Kepala Batas.

"There are many Indians in Kepala Batas and I help them. Funds are provided to repair their temples as we respect their religion.

"They are not our enemy but we sit together and *muafakat* (co-operate)."

Abdullah said MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu was constantly bringing the community's requests to him.

"Samy makes requests to me for the Indian community and I approve and give them grants. I have never said no. We support the Indians but there are some quarters inciting them and making them unhappy with the government."

The prime minister called on Malaysians, especially the Indians, to carefully evaluate the Hindraf memorandum and statements.

"I do not want Indians to be duped by them."

Abdullah said many had gone to Hindraf's illegal rally to hear what it had to say about the oppression of and crimes against the Indian community by the government.

"These are all lies that can cause racial conflict in the country, espe-

cially between the Indians and Malays. Is this what we want? In Malaysia, there has been no conflict between the Muslims and Indians or Islam and Hinduism. It has never happened," he said.

Abdullah felt Hindraf's bigger motive was to cause chaos and disturb the peace.

"This country has rules and laws. We have a constitution and we are successful today as we abide by it and hold firmly to the Rukun Negara."

Asked for his views on other planned street demonstrations, Abdullah said he had instructed the police to deal with them and take the appropriate measures.

This month, the Bar Council is staging its annual walk for human rights while Bersih is planning a demonstration outside Parliament House on Dec 11 to protest a constitutional amendment allowing election commissioners to serve until the age of 66.

A third demonstration is being planned by the opposition and non-governmental organisations to protest road toll increases due next year.

"I have asked the police to talk to them and do what is appropriate. In fact, this should not happen. Why must street demonstrations be chosen to bring change and present demands?" he asked.

As an example, he said many of the proposals of the Bersih demonstration on Nov 10 had already been fulfilled.

The Election Commission had introduced the use of indelible ink and transparent ballot boxes. In addition, the names of the dead had been erased under an exercise to clean up the electoral roll.

Abdullah said the Election Commission had worked out arrangements for party representatives to be present when postal votes were cast.

"But despite this, they do not believe us but think only they (the opposition) are right. If we are a rotten government, we would have been removed as the people are not stupid and cannot be cheated."

Abdullah said the BN had governed for 50 years and had brought development.

"I admit there are weaknesses and there is still work to be done. There is no country in the world or any leader who can say he has done everything and there are no more poor people in his country."

He pointed out that development was a process that did not end.

"There are still poor people (in the country) and we still need to bring them out of poverty. We have to strengthen ties between the races and religions."

Abdullah said he was not prepared to leave the country hostage to irresponsible groups.

"I do not want our country, which is growing steadily and attracting investors, to be destroyed. I do not want the country to be in disarray as a result of the action of an irresponsible few."