

IF the choice is between public safety and public freedoms, I do not hesitate to say that public safety will always win. My responsibility is to the greater public, especially in the face of police intelligence about planned violent intent.

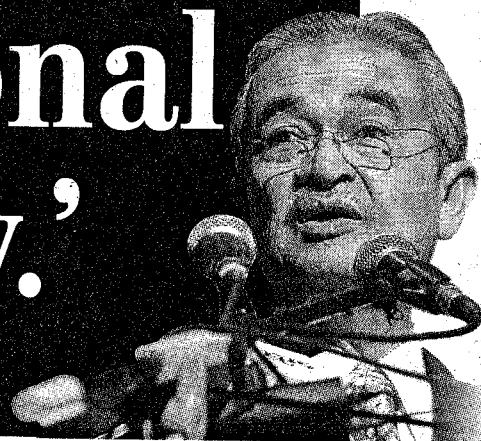
The people must remember that there are many groups in this country — each with their own set of demands, each with their own set of sensitivities.

These differences are very real, yet we do not descend into chaos because there are enough of us who do not forget, who know and remember our complexities.

We understand that our situation demands balance, conscientiousness and A SENSE OF ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE WHOLE, RATHER THAN TO A FEW!

'I'm willing to sacrifice public freedoms for the sake of national stability.'

DATUK SERI ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI



A true Malaysian understands very well the impact of careless words and actions. A true Malaysian is acutely aware of who will be provoked into retaliation and who will actually suffer the consequences.

Because of this, a true Malaysian will try to be judicious in word and deed, even when striving for change!

ALSO: ABDULLAH ON...

Are you still the 'Mr Nice Guy' and 'Mr Clean' the media labelled you 10 years ago?

Has the government walked the talk in fighting corruption?

>> REPORT: P2

>> TEXT OF SPEECH:
P28-29

PM: Never take our peace for granted

NST-11/12/2007

By Hamidah Atan
news@nst.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: Public safety will always trump public freedoms, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday.

He said that if he had to make a choice between public safety and public freedoms, he would not hesitate to act in the interest of public safety.

"I will not sacrifice my sense of accountability to the greater public, especially in the face of police intelligence about planned fighting or other violent intent.

"We must never ever take our peace for granted. We must continue to be responsible to each other," he said in his speech at the Khazanah Global Lecture Series at the Putrajaya International Convention Centre.

Elaborating during a question-and-answer session later where he was asked on the steps to be taken to maintain peace and stability in the wake of recent demonstrations and clashes with police, Abdullah said if he had to use the Internal Security Act (ISA) for specific reasons, he would do so without regret.

"God knows I have a duty to do. If I have to sign it, I will do so without feeling guilty or sad."

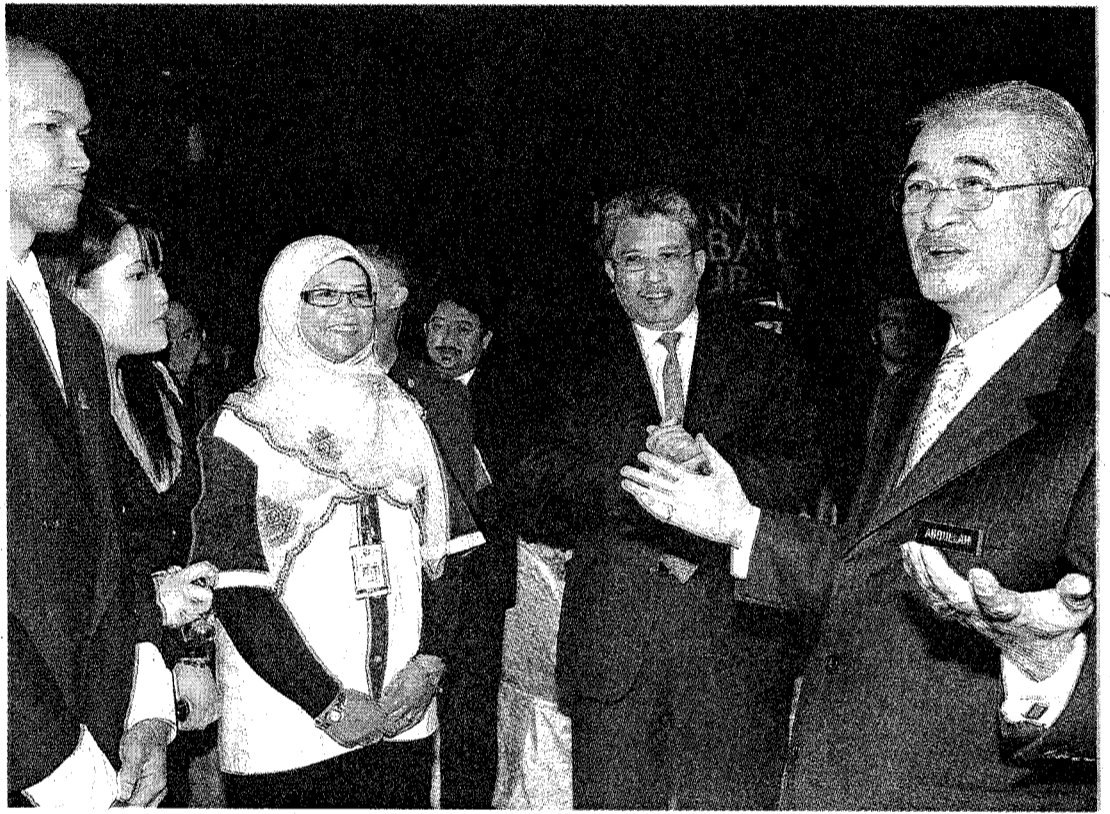
He said that as far as he was concerned, "what is right is right and what is wrong is wrong. They break the laws, I have to deal with them and when it comes to enforcing the laws, we must apply them equally. There is no such thing as being above the law."

Abdullah's comments in recent days have indicated that while he was hesitant to use detention laws against those who have been engineering unrest using race and religion and organised illegal demonstrations which turned violent, he was nearing the end of his patience.

With growing calls for the government to take tougher action against the demonstrators and agitators, Abdullah's comments appeared to indicate that if intelligence suggested that there could be violence, he would not be deterred from using controversial detention laws to ensure public safety and order.

Present at the talk were Abdullah's wife Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah, the Raja Muda of Perak Raja Dr Nazrin Shah and captains of industry, academics and civil servants.

The proceedings were carried



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi talking to students of Universiti Putra Malaysia during a break at the Khazanah Global Lecture Series yesterday. On Abdullah's right is Khazanah Nasional Bhd's managing director Datuk Azman Mokhtar.

live via video conferencing to five universities — Universiti Malaya, Universiti Tenaga Nasional (Uniten), Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

Abdullah said the people should not tread on racial sensitivities to seek support or votes.

"If voters are easily swayed by this, then we are heading for disaster. This is what I fear most. They should cast their votes and not take to the streets so that we know what they want, the type of development they are asking for and the future.

"The people must understand that government policies are for everybody and for all races."

He said Malaysians must refrain from supporting anything that could cause instability.

"We have done well in the last 50 years because of our peace and stability and we are determined to continue this."

If Malaysians were to evolve into a society that could peacefully live with media freedom, public debate or public displays of expression, the value and burden of responsibility must lie with the ordinary people, not just with those who manage the country.

The value of responsibility, he said, was as important today as it was in 1957 or 1969 (when bloody racial riots saw the imposition of emergency laws and suspension of parliament).

"I see the emphasis on responsibility, particularly to each other, as an integral value of the nation in this age of relative affluence and stability. We sometimes forget that there are many groups within the country, each with their own set of demands, each with their own set of sensitivities.

"These differences are very real, yet we do not descend into unmitigated chaos. Why? Because I think there are enough of us who do not forget, who know and remember our complexity.

"Those who do not forget understand the country's situation demands balance, conscientiousness, a sense of responsibility to the whole rather than the few.

"To me, this characterises a true Malaysian who understands very well the impact of careless words and actions, who is acutely aware of who will be provoked into retaliation and who will actually suffer the consequences."

Because of this, he said, a true Malaysian would always try to be

judicious in word and deed, even when striving for change.

Abdullah also said political, economic and cultural fairness were values that would continue to shape and steer the country into its next 50 years.

Later, when asked by moderator Datuk Seri Anuar Zaini whether he was still "Mr Nice Guy" and "Mr Clean" as the media labelled him 10 years ago, Abdullah said: "God knows I am clean and I am still nice today. Being nice should be your character and you don't have to change."

Asked whether the government had really walked the talk in fighting corruption, he said this was not easy as it would take a long time to battle the menace.

Preventive measures and enhancement of the public delivery system would help reduce, if not tackle, the problem, he said.

Abdullah also said he did not interfere with the actions taken by the Attorney-General's office or other law enforcement agencies against those who were allegedly involved and that he would continue his policy of non-interference in the work of these agencies.

TEXT OF SPEECH: P28 & 29

PERADUAN Cari Benda
TERSIMBUNYI
Win a grand total of
RM155,000
in CASH PRIZES.
Get
BERITA HARIAN
now!!