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PM to look into Indian problems

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PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has given an assurance that the plight of the Indian community in the country will be looked into and addressed accordingly.

The assurance was given to leaders and representatives of 14 NGOs, led by Malaysian Hindu Council chairman Datuk R. Nadarajah, during a two-hour meeting at the prime minister's office yesterday.

Also present was MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu.

Nadarajah said that the discussion centred on all aspects, including education, unity, agriculture and economy.

"We brought to his attention the expectations of the Indian community and he was very concerned.

"The prime minister said he would look into all these and we are satisfied with the meeting. He gave each and every one of us the time to raise the problems facing the Indian community and he took down all the points highlighted.

"From his body language and response, we knew he was deeply concerned with the problems facing the community. He also gave an assurance that this would not be our first meeting with him. There will be more follow-up discussions."

The representatives were from the Malaysian Hindu Sangam, Malaysian Hindu Dhar-

ma Mamandram, Malaysian Hindu Council, Sri Murugan Centre, Malaysian Hindu Youth Council, Malaysian Indian Youth Council, Malaysian Tamil Youth Bell Clubs Council, Malaysian Associated Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Malaysian Indian Business Association, National Land Finance Co-operative Society, National Union of Plantation Workers, Malaysia Tamil School Headmasters Association, Child Information, Learning and Development Centre and Social Strategic Foundation.

Nadarajah said representatives from the Malaysian Human Rights Commission (Suhakam) were also present.

He added the prime minister reminded them to inform their members and followers on why the Internal Security Act had to be invoked and why the government had to act firmly.

This was in reference to the detention of five men associated with the Hindu Rights Action Force (Hindraf) on Thursday. Those detained were P. Uthayakumar, M. Manoharan, R. Kenghadharan, V. Ganabathirau and T. Vasantha Kumar.

Malaysian Hindu Dharma Mamandram chairman Associate Professor Dr N.S. Rajendran said the meeting was cordial and Abdullah stressed the importance of unity as a responsibility to be upheld by all citizens.

Abdullah also stated he would continue to discuss the plight of the Indian community not only with leaders of Indian-based NGOs but also with Samy Vellu.

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