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M'sia neither secular nor theocratic: PM

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At the Dewan Rakyat

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says the application of Islam Hadhari does not mean Malaysia is a theocratic country.

"The Islam Hadhari approach is a guide to the government in implementing its responsibility in a fair and just manner to all Malaysians.

"The Islam Hadhari approach also fulfils the need to preserve harmony in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country," he added.

"The government which I am leading is a government based on the principles of parliamentary democracy and is responsible to Parliament," he said.

He said at the same time the Cabinet which is made up of Muslims, Buddhists, Hindu, Christians and others approach in a consensus manner to discuss and produce national development policies.

Abdullah said the government always paid attention and implemented what is best to preserve unity and the people's interest, including ensuring all Malaysians are free to practise their religion.

"All quarters receive aid from the government, whether they are mosques,

suraus, temples or churches. The country's development has been implemented fairly, without any ethnic community or religious community being oppressed," he said.

Abdullah said this was what was meant by his deputy, Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak, when he said that Malaysia was an Islamic country.

He added that this was the sort of administration used by the Malaysian government for the last 50 years.

"This unique formula has been successfully tested and I don't see why a government formed such a way could not be continued into the future," Abdullah said.

"I also reject the argument that this is against the social contract which was decided together by our leaders in the past," he added.

He reminded all that the Federal Constitution was formulated and undertaken in an understanding and cooperative manner by the three largest communities during their struggle to achieve independence and only contains articles which take into account the needs of various communities to live in a peaceful manner.

"For example, even though Islam is the official religion of the federation, the adherents of other religions are free to practise their religions.

"The application of Islamic principles in the country's administration which I

have stated earlier has in no way changed the Social Contract or the basis of our Constitution," Abdullah stressed.

He added the government allows various quarters the space to voice their views.

"However, it is absolutely wrong if certain quarters thought that such a space has no limitation," Abdullah said.

He said it was not the government's intention to bar the freedom to voice views but any act or word which could whip up emotions or anger among the various communities in the country would have exceeded the freedom allowed.

"We must be aware that there is too much at stake, economic, political and social stability that could be destroyed if religious or ethnic sensitivity is not taken into account," Abdullah said, adding that was the reason why the government would not hesitate to take legal action when certain quarters abused freedom of speech.

In a written reply to **Lim Kit Siang (DAP-Ipoh Timur)**, Abdullah reiterated that Malaysia is neither a secular nor a theocratic country.

"Malaysia is an Islamic country which is administered based on the principles of Islam and at the same time holds strong to the principles of parliamentary democracy guided by the highest law of the land - the Federal Constitution," said Abdullah.