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No advantage from merging BN parties: PM

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PENANG: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said there is no advantage to be derived from merging the 14 Barisan National component parties into a single entity as proposed by Gerakan Youth.

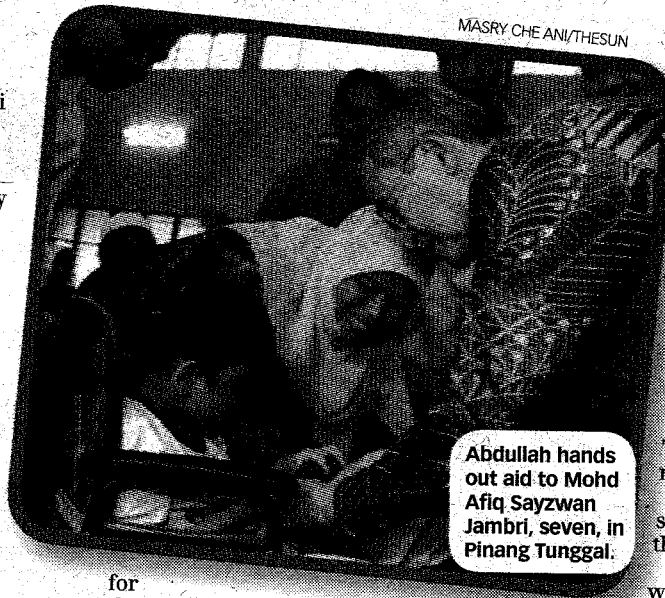
Speaking at a press conference after handing out Hari Raya aid to the poor and needy at his service centre in Kepala Batas yesterday afternoon, he said: "If (we) merge into one single party, factions may arise wanting to push their own candidates up for elections and misunderstandings may arise.

"I am not saying that it is impossible but not now. Maybe in the future. Now is not the time as there is no advantage in merging the component parties," he added.

He said the current formula of the coalition works for BN.

"The BN coalition is effective and successful now and the cooperation between its component parties is very good where we can discuss issues and find solutions together," he said.

On another matter, the prime minister seemed in the dark when asked the reasons



Abdullah hands out aid to Mohd Afiq Sayzwan Jambri, seven, in Pinang Tunggal.

for the delay in handing over of keys to tsunami victims in Tanjung Bungah to allow them to move into their new homes.

"Those who meet the requirements can move in immediately," he said.

When told that the victims had held a demonstration yesterday as they were

unable to move into their new homes, he looked puzzled and insisted they could move in already.

"As long as they have met the requirements, they should be able to move into the new units," he said.

When pressed further on whether he will order an investigation on the reasons for the delay, he replied "no", but seemed unhappy over being informed about the delay by the media.

Meanwhile, Abdullah urged those who are driving long distance during this festive season to be more careful.

"Ops *Stiap* has started so drivers should be more careful and not speed. There is no need to speed because it may cause you your lives," he said.

He advised drivers who are tired to stop and rest before continuing with their journey for safety's sake.

"We want to celebrate Hari Raya with joy and not sadness, so please be more careful when on the road. We do not want this *Ramadan* month to be a month of a lot of accidents and sadness," he said.

Earlier in the day, Abdullah distributed Hari Raya aid to the less fortunate at Dewan Budi Penyayang in Kepala Batas and the community hall in Pinang Tunggal.

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