

'I am PM of all races'

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Abdullah: It is my duty to be honest and fair to everyone

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PENANG: I am a Malay but I am a prime minister of all races – that was Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's message to the people.

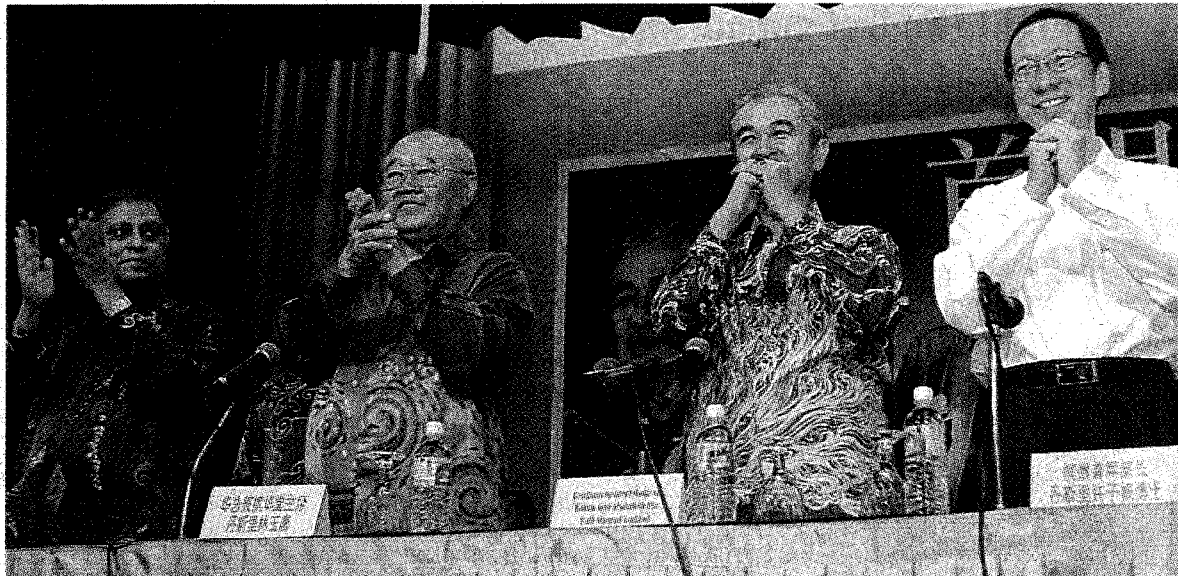
Speaking at a dialogue session with the Chinese community at the Penang Chinese Town Hall (PCTH) yesterday, the premier said as a Muslim, it was his duty to be "honest and fair" to everyone regardless of their race or religion.

"The Quran tells us to always have integrity and this is something I will never forget. As a Muslim, I will one day meet my Maker and He (Allah) will ask me what I have done as the Prime Minister of Malaysia.

"I cannot lie because God is all-knowing," he said, adding that he had friends from all communities.

"Until today, my Indian and Chinese school friends are very close to me and we have never had an argument. Similarly, in the Government, I am friends with leader representatives from various communities because we are *satu hati* (united) and have a common mind and objective.

"Let me tell you honestly, Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon is my good friend. And when (Datuk Seri) Ong Ka Ting, (Datuk Seri Dr) Lim Keng Yaik or Tsu Koon ask me for help, I never say no.



Festive greetings: (From left) Second Finance Minister Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop, Penang Chinese Town Hall chairman Tan Sri Lim Gait Tong, Abdullah and Dr Koh wishing Happy New Year to participants of the dialogue session with the Chinese community at the Penang Chinese Town Hall yesterday.

"When Ka Ting asked me to solve issues relating to Chinese schools, I immediately picked up the phone and asked (Datuk Seri) Hishammuddin to look into the problem. We want all our children to have access to good quality education, to become good friends and good Malaysians," he said.

The Barisan chairman noted that it was not enough for the children to be *pandai* (smart) as they also needed to have good hearts.

"Today we have 100% literacy in the country and it is time to focus on developing human values. We must add value and quality to the success



we have achieved in the last 50 years otherwise we cannot progress. That is what I want for the future," he

said, adding that since he became Prime Minister in 2003, the country has been peaceful.

"Of course there are minor misunderstandings. *Sedangkan lidah lagi tergigit*, what more when we are a multi-racial society.

"What is important is that we are willing to talk and solve our problems together," he added.

In his speech, Dr Koh said the Barisan Nasional realises that it was a government elected "by and for people."

"We take into account all the various views and wishes when formulating policies."