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'Declare your religion'

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PM: Tell your family before you convert

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PUTRAJAYA: The Government will soon introduce a regulation requiring non-Muslims wishing to convert to Islam to inform their family before doing so.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said this would prevent problems of families disputing the conversion of their loved ones when they die.

He suggested that non-Muslims who intend to convert have a form or letter declaring that their families had been told and had understood his or her decision.

Noting that there was no such regulation at present, Abdullah advised them to inform their families to "make things easier for everyone."

"We will have a regulation. When a person wants to convert to Islam, we have to ask him whether his wife knows about it. If people want to convert, there is nothing wrong, why must they hide? Tell them (the family).

"We don't want problems later when the man converts and converts the children also, when the



Serious matter: Abdullah (second from right) getting ready to chair the meeting in Putrajaya yesterday. Also present were (from left) Jakim director-general Datuk Wan Mohamad Abdul Aziz, Minister in the Prime Minister Department Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Attorney-General Tan Sri Abdul Gani Patail.

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wife has rights too," he told reporters after chairing a meeting of the National Council on Islamic Religious Affairs here yesterday.

Abdullah pointed out that withholding such information from the

family would pose a problem to religious authorities performing their duties.

He said he told those at the meeting that religious issues were "very sensitive" and should be tackled wisely to avoid racial tension.

This included the demolition of places of worship and funeral disputes, he said.

Abdullah also said that it was agreed that the *halal* certificate would now be issued by the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HIDC) but would still bear the logo of the Malaysian Islamic Development Department (Jakim).

He said the meeting also discussed the assimilation of Jakim's research officers into the HIDC.