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PM calls for calm amid FB storm

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STOP POLARISATION:

Statement was meant as a reminder to all traders, says Najib

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THE Facebook post made by Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob was a reminder to errant traders who refused to reduce their prices despite the drop in fuel prices.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the statement made was directed to all traders and not targeted specifically at any one community.

"The reminder was for all traders... other than that, he (Ismail Sabri) had also suggested that con-

sumers exercise their power, so traders will be compelled to lower the prices of goods and services," he said in a statement yesterday.

Najib also gave his assurances that the Barisan Nasional administration would continue to protect the interests of all communities in Malaysia, irrespective of race.

"Any dispute which can lead to racial polarisation must stop, as it will only bring harm to all of us," he said.

The cabinet had called on all traders to be responsible and thoughtful as they determined the prices of goods and services in line with the drop in petrol and diesel prices in order for consumers to feel the impact of cheaper fuel prices, said Najib.

He also urged Malaysians to be smart consumers and to use their purchasing power to encourage traders and businesses to offer fair prices.

Earlier this week, Ismail Sabri had posted on his Facebook account a call for Malays, being the

majority of consumers, to boycott Chinese traders who refused to bring down the prices of their goods despite the drop in fuel prices.

He had said consumers should not just rely on the government, as they had the greater power and could determine prices by boycotting errant traders.

He came under fire from several quarters for what they deemed a racist statement.

Ismail Sabri later deleted the Facebook post.

In its stead, he posted a clarification saying he had not been targeting the Chinese community, only stubborn businessmen and traders who had used rising oil prices to increase the prices of their own goods.

Now, he had said, they were refusing to bring down the prices of their goods despite a drop in fuel prices.

Police have since said Ismail Sabri would be called in to have his statement recorded over the posting.