

Najib: Let the Prime Minister decide without pressure

The Star - 21/1/2008



Najib: "It is against the Cabinet system and unprecedented"

KUALA LUMPUR: Everyone should let the Prime Minister make an appropriate and just decision on the issue of laws affecting the rights of non-Muslims after considering all views and without any pressure, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"The Prime Minister is the leader of all races and not only of a certain community, so I am confident that the decision he will make on the issue will be a fair and just one," he said.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the action by 10 non-Muslim Cabinet ministers in submitting a memorandum to Datuk

Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi calling for a review of these laws was "improper" and "not nice".

"It is against the Cabinet system and unprecedented," he said at the Malaysian-French Chamber of Commerce annual dinner here last night.

Najib advised the public to stay calm, saying: "In the history of our nation, we have faced many major issues touching on racial sensitivities. We know the best way is to use channels within the Cabinet to resolve any complications."

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Mo-

hammad Nazri Abdul Aziz said the non-Muslim ministers should withdraw their memorandum.

"It is a dangerous precedent. In principle, the Cabinet had already discussed and agreed on a review of all laws pertaining to a conversion of a non-Muslim to Islam.

"Their action seems to suggest a rift between non-Muslim and Muslim ministers. The Muslim ministers are patient and moderate and we can discuss this in the Cabinet," he said.

In **PUTRAJAYA**, Umno Youth said the Cabinet members must abide by the principle of work-

ing together.

"They acted as if they are not part of the Cabinet line-up appointed by the Prime Minister. They should instead use the present channel like the Cabinet meeting and Barisan Nasional meeting," said the movement's exco member Datuk Pirdaus Ismail said.

However, International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said what her colleagues in the Cabinet had brought up was appropriate as they represented the views and thoughts of the non-Muslims on the matter.

"We, the Muslims, are also concerned over the process which determines who is a Muslim and who is not. If a person is a Muslim convert and he is wrongly buried, we are concerned.

"Similarly, if a Muslim professes to have left the faith (apostate) but is buried as a Muslim, this is also of concern to us," she added.

In **SUNGAI PETANI**, Deputy Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin said the assurance given by the Prime Minister on the issue had eased tensions felt by the people.