

PM: Handle issues of race, religion with care

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KUCHING: Issues concerning race and religion should be handled with great care and caution in Malaysia as such matters could easily hurt feelings.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi issued this reminder to Barisan Nasional parties.

He said although the country had been under the multi-racial BN for a long time, issues concerning race and religion were still very sensitive among many Malaysians.

"We must always remind ourselves of this as we might forget such matters at times.

"If a mistake (concerning race or religion) has been made, it is only proper for us to stop such acts and never repeat them."

The Prime Minister said this yesterday at the opening of the Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party's third annual general assembly at the Damai Lagoon Resort in Santubong.

Also present were SPDP president Datuk William Mawan Ikom, Deputy Chief Ministers Tan Sri Dr George Chan and Tan Sri Alfred Jabu Numpang, and state Cabinet members.

Abdullah said the nation en-

'No dialogue with Israel'

KUCHING: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today ruled out the prospect of Malaysia having a dialogue with Tel Aviv on the worsening Middle East crisis.

"Malaysia does not have any relations or diplomatic ties with Israel.

"So, the question of having a dialogue with Tel Aviv does not arise at all," said the Prime Minister, who is also Organisation of Islamic Conference chairman.

joyed good race relations and "I thank God our nation is still safe (in this respect)".

The Prime Minister repeatedly stressed that race relations were the cornerstone of the nation's well-being and progress.

He said no BN component party could stand alone and claim to be effectively representing the people.

"Even Umno, if it is alone, cannot enjoy the level of strength and stability enjoyed under the BN umbrella.

Abdullah was asked to respond to a statement by the Israeli ambassador to Singapore Ilan Ben Dov that his country wants to have a dialogue with Malaysia and Indonesia to resolve the Israel-Lebanon crisis.

Israel has incurred the wrath of the international community for its military aggression in southern Lebanon, killing innocent civilians, causing sufferings, loss of homes and properties. — Bernama

"This is a fact. It is the same whether it is a big or small party. The BN formula has been successful under all our previous Prime Ministers and it has been successful with me so far.

"Race relations are inter-related to the BN and our aspirations for the nation. We must always work as a team to bring about development for our people and this must be done with utmost sincerity and conviction."

Abdullah also congratulated SPDP for winning all eight state

seats contested in the last State elections.

Although the multi-racial offshoot of the Sarawak National Party was just four years old, the Prime Minister was impressed with the youngest BN member's achievements.

"It is an impressive record for the BN's *anak bongsu*. I hope you can maintain this and improve services to the people of Sarawak.

"It is a natural tendency for anyone to think about their own community first but in a multi-racial country like ours, we must always consider the interests and well-being of other races too.

"No one race or ethnic group must be left behind in our march towards development."

He said one of the main thrusts of government policy was the provision of equal opportunity to all Malaysians, irrespective of race or religion.

Abdullah said the Government wanted to ensure that no one, especially those in the rural areas, was deprived of educational opportunities.

He said every attempt should be made to eradicate illiteracy.

This was necessary if Malaysia was to be seen as a developed nation.