

Festive greetings are not taboo, says Abdullah

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■ **By Hamidah Atan**
news@nst.com.my

PUTRAJAYA: The Prime Minister sent a strong message yesterday that festive greetings are not taboo when he wished his staff Happy Deepavali and Selamat Hari Raya Puasa.

The occasion was the presentation of Deepavali and Hari Raya goodies to support staff of the Prime Minister's Office.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Malaysian tradition of visiting each other during

festivals had enhanced the unity and solidarity among the races.

This tradition had made Malaysians one big, happy family and it must remain, he said.

"There is nothing wrong for us to go to our Hindu friends' houses during Deepavali or our Hindu friends visiting us during Hari Raya.

"After all, this is what we have been doing all these years. There is no problem. Doing so will not erode your faith in your religion nor your friends' in theirs."

Abdullah said there should not

be any confusion over the *kongsi raya* celebration.

"When we have a *kongsi raya*, it does not mean that the Muslims will have go to the temples and the non-Muslims to the mosques. Both the Muslims and non-Muslims will celebrate their festivals in their own way and according to their religions."

He said the social relations between the races were not a problem in the country.

"There should not be any confusion. We have heard of talk that can create or lead to confusion,"

he said in apparent reference to an email sent by Takaful Malaysia's syariah department head Mohd Fauzi Mustaffa that wishing Happy Durga Pooja, Happy Lakshmi Pooja and Happy Deepavali might be considered as greetings to the Hindu gods Durga, Lakshmi and Krishna and were blasphemous and against the teachings of Islam.

Takaful Malaysia subsequently apologised for any confusion or ill feeling that might have arisen because of the email and extended Deepavali greetings to all Malaysians celebrating the festival.