

NST -
20/7/2006

‘The facts of history can never be changed... There is no need for us to hurl accusations at other races.’

Abdullah

REPLYING TO QUESTIONS ON THE STATE OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH TUN DR MAHATHIR:

‘When I see him, I will greet him, I will shake his hands, and if there is time to speak, I will say a few words.’

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PUTRAJAYA: A controversial guidebook used by Universiti Putra Malaysia to foster closer ethnic relations among students will be withdrawn.

The decision was reached by the Cabinet after the Prime Minister spoke passionately behind closed doors on the pain and suffering he witnessed during the May 13 riots in 1969. The unanimous view was that the guidebook — which assigns blame on incidents to race groups and political parties — had no place in a course aimed at breaking down the walls of prejudice and suspicion among races.

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Abdullah

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It will be replaced with a book drawn up by a panel of historians, the Cabinet decided during its weekly meeting.

A senior minister told the *New Straits Times* last night: “There are not many people who have stories about May 13. I am one of them. When Pak Lah related the stories about May 13, I could see the demonstrations myself. He spent quite a while talking about it because I think he felt that he had to pass on some lessons to the younger ministers.”

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who announced the Cabinet’s decision in the afternoon, said:

“I gave my views that the facts of history can never be changed ... It is not appropriate for us to raise matters that can create an inconclusive situation or lead to unwanted incidents.

“There is no need for us to hurl accusations at other races. We should not blame a race simply because a group or individuals of that race have done something wrong.

“For instance, if there is a group of Muslim terrorists, we cannot accuse all Muslims of being terrorists.”

University students are required from this year to take the course for one semester to help them understand other races and promote healthy debate on ethnic integration. Each university has so far issued its own textbook on the subject.



Abdullah answering questions on the withdrawal of the guidebook used by UPM yesterday.

But a guidebook at the UPM triggered a debate by assigning blame for the 1969 race riots on the Democratic Action Party and blamed Indians for the disturbances in Kampung Medan in Petaling Jaya in 2001.

Abdullah said textbooks should not distort historical facts and must avoid generalisations and accusations against any ethnic

groups.

“Racial and ethnic issues are still sensitive, even though our country has been independent (from Britain) for 50 years,” Abdullah told a news conference. “We’re still in the stage of nation-building.”

The panel of historians will have their work cut out for them. “This book will take into consideration

all factors so that our future generations will not get confused or make inaccurate conclusions on certain things relating to the races in the country.

“We want the relationship between the various races to remain good all the time. It is for this reason that the book is being removed and replaced with a new one.”

The Cabinet felt that it was time everyone looked forward. Abdullah felt that everyone could learn from the way Tun Razak Hussein handled matters after the riots in 1969. He noted that the then prime minister was vested with much power but he insisted on getting views from different races and building a consensus before making decisions.