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## Abdullah offers new perspectives on current issues

DEPUTY Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi discussed the "black eye incident", the imminent Sabah election, his "Mr Clean" image and other topical issues in a live interview with New Straits Times Press group editor-in-chief Datuk A. Kadir Jasin, aired over TVI on Tuesday night. This is the first of the two-part transcript of his interview.

Q: What are your feelings about being the new Deputy Prime Minister?

A: I am grateful to God for this appointment. But I always remind myself that there is a lot of work to be done. The people hope I will carry out my duties sincerely and with dedication so that my work is satisfactory.

Q: With the appointment, do you think you have more work now given the expectations of the people and the Prime Minister?

A: Yes, it feels like that. The hopes placed on me are very high. When I read comments in the newspapers and from letters from friends, I know they have expectations of me. I know that I have to carry out my duties well and assist the Prime Minister in ensuring that the Government programmes are carried out as planned. I must execute this with full responsibility.

Q: Although there are some who feel that your appointment was unexpected, they still welcomed it as it was seen as a conciliatory move. Do you agree?

A: I did not expect to be appointed as I have many friends in Umno who are experienced. I am not involved in any faction. That is why people say that if Pak Lah goes up, everyone will be his friend. And since becoming DPM, I have maintained that among my priorities is to unite the party although I am not deputy president. But as DPM, I have plenty of work to do and I need support from friends, especially those in the Government. I do not take into consideration their background or whether they supported me or not. Our struggle in the party is important. That is why many believe I can help unite the party.

Q: How long before your appointment as Deputy Prime Minister did you know that you were going to be appointed?

A: I was not told at all .... before that I was invited to (the Prime Minister's) office to discuss the appointment of the Deputy Prime Minister. He (Dr Mahathir) sought my views. He also asked my opinion on calls that he should name a deputy.

Q. There has been much discussion on the injuries inflicted on Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim while in police custody. Today, the Prime Minister said the report would be made public. The Government did not determine the terms of reference of the commission. As DPM and Home Minister, do you hope that the commission will make recommendations on areas beyond the injuries inflicted on Anwar?

A: I know that the commission has been given some terms of reference, and it is being asked to concentrate on the incident that caused the injury to Anwar while in police custody.

The Government views the incident seriously. We don't take it lightly and it is a criminal offence to inflict injury on any person while in police custody.

This is a major issue. That's why we decided to investigate, but the investigation has yet to be completed and it seems the public hopes it is truly independent and not conducted by a body which is said to be independent but whose members are police officers.

In this matter, the Government's decision - after listening to the views