

**Pak Lah: Why I met Ambiga before Bersih rally**  
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Former premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has cleared the air about a meeting he had with Bersih 2.0 chief Ambiga Sreenevasan, which had created speculation among netizens about his role as mediator ahead of the rally.

He explained that he had sought the help of a friend to set up the meeting with her. "I wanted to see her because I wanted to remind her that the Agong had made a very important statement on this issue, and she as a Malaysian must abide by that," he said.

"I also expressed my belief that they shouldn't have the rally because it would cause a lot of problems. I have not seen her since then (and) didn't say anything anymore," he said.

He was speaking to journalists after opening the World Islamic Tourism Forum in Kuala Lumpur this morning.

Asked to comment on allegations of police brutality during the rally last Saturday, Abdullah defended the police, citing the difficult situation they were in.

"Under the circumstances, because of the pressure and fears among the people that something bad might happen, I think the police were doing the best they could.

"Its not easy, but they managed to ensure the rally did not get into the kind of situation that would be disastrous."

However, he conceded that the government may suffer some adverse effects following the rally.

Major street demonstrations by Bersih and Hindraf during his tenure have been linked to the setback suffered by Barisan Nasional in the March 8, 2008 general election.

**'Gov't sensitive to good proposals'**

Abdullah expressed confidence that the government will act on the electoral demands of Bersih 2.0 if these are in the best interests of the people.

"I think our government is sensitive. If there is something can be done that is good, that makes our elections more efficient, then why not? They (the government) will do it."

But he said the demands should only be taken up if these are sincere.

"If (these are) just demands for the sake of demanding and creating problems, (or) bringing up issues that do not add more quality to the elections..., then we don't have to do it.

"But if (these can add) quality, then surely it is only reasonable that the government will say 'yes'. It would be natural for the government to consider (the demands)."