

Pak Lah: I haven't turned against Umno
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Former prime minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has denied turning against Umno in an interview that was critical of the party.

Abdullah, popularly known as Pak Lah, was referring to an interview he gave the two editors of a book entitled 'Awakening: The Abdullah Badawi Years in Malaysia' a compilation of articles about his administration from 2003 to 2009.

NONE"Do not make assumptions that the book was written by Pak Lah who has supposedly conspired with the opposition against his own party. That is a distortion of facts and slander," he said in a statement today.

"Whatever criticism I made in my interview was because I want to see Umno continue receiving the rakyat's mandate and trust."

The former Umno president said he would never abandon the party.

"I have never left Umno, and god willing, when the time comes and I breathe my last breath, I will remain a member of Umno that loves this country," he said.

Abdullah said he had expected that the book would invite various reactions, but said it is up to people to draw their own conclusions.

'I did it out of openness'

He acknowledged knowing that the book would contain articles that are unflattering of his administration.

However, he said that, in the spirit of openness and balanced debate, he had agreed to the interview.

"Like it or not, agree or not, I hold to the principle of openness that is the pivot of a mature democracy," said the 73-year-old elder statesman.

"It is this principle of openness that I practised when I was approached by the writers for an interview."

pak lah istana negara meet agung on final day 020409 01Abdullah added that it is

only appropriate that he provides explanations when academics scrutinise his administration.

"It is the norm for academicians to analyse our country's political history and certainly my era does not escape academic research.

"I agreed to the interview so that my voice, opinion and explanation can be part of the book."

'Focus on my answers'

Abdullah, the former Kepala Batas MP, clarified that he did not write the book and that he will not attend the launch. He said he had no role whatsoever in the book beyond the interview.

"I merely answered questions that were asked. Let my answers be the focus of readers," he said.

He said that, if opposition figures participate in the book launch, this would be at the sole discretion of the publishers.

The book, published by the Strategic Information and Research Development Centre, was edited by political scientists Bridget Welsh and James Chin.

The duo have explained that the book launch, which PKR's Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar is due to attend, has been postponed to avoid further "misunderstandings" because the contents have been politicised in media reports.

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