

Abdullah says he won't embarrass new leader
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who clashed dramatically with his predecessor when he came to power, has said he won't "embarrass" the government when he leaves office next month.

Abdullah told a public forum late yesterday that he planned to devote himself to fishing, gardening and planting trees when he steps aside in favour of deputy premier Najib Abdul Razak on March 31.

The prime minister, who is being squeezed out after disastrous results in general elections a year ago, said he may also have some sort of official role but that it would not conflict with the new leadership.

"Maybe there is something that I want to do but let me discuss first with Najib. Whatever I do, I do not want to embarrass the government," he said according to the New Straits Times.

Soon after taking office in 2003, Abdullah began dismantling pet projects initiated by his predecessor, veteran leader Dr Mahathir Mohamad who had been in power for 22 years, triggering furious public rows between the pair.

Mahathir accused his hand-picked successor of nepotism, corruption and economic mismanagement and spearheaded efforts to force him out of the top job after shock losses in the March 2008 elections.

The ruling Barisan Nasional coalition lost five states and a third of parliamentary seats to the resurgent opposition, in its worst performance in half a century.