

Cabinet reshuffle?

I have no inspiration yet,, says Abdullah

THE setting was just right.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was relaxed and in good

spirits following the conclusion of a successful trip to London and New York. So a reporter lobbed him a perennial question about a possible Cabinet reshuffle, believing that this was the day when he would share with Malaysians when he would wield the axe.

What he received was a wide grin and a perennial response from Abdullah. "I have not got any inspiration," he said, using a line that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad relied on when he was hounded with periodic speculation about a Cabinet reshuffle.

Abdullah was told that many people believed that a change in the line-up of ministers was imminent because of comments made by Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik on a possible merger of three ministries.

Dr Lim had suggested that the development of information and communications technology be handled by just one ministry.

At present, three ministries oversee different aspects of the industry.

Content and software development is handled by the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry, licensing comes under the Information Ministry while the construction of infrastructure such as transmission towers, comes under the Energy, Water and Communications Ministry headed by Dr Lim.

To this, Abdullah replied: "Keng Yaik is entitled to his views but I am the only one who decides on the Cabinet line-up."

But surely there was something that he wanted to say about this swirling speculation, implored the reporter, hoping that the combination of desperation and public interest would get Abdullah to open up.

The Prime Minister did not take the bait. He

BRENDAN PEREIRA
reporting from
NEW YORK



MEETING UP: Abdullah greeting Lebanese Member of Parliament Saad Hariri (left) in New York yesterday.

just offered a smile.

In recent weeks, there has been more than the usual speculation on the Cabinet reshuffle, propelled by the MCA and Gerakan election results and Tan Sri Isa Samad's suspension from Umno for money politics. Some newspaper columnists and the political pundits have said that Abdullah will make a slight change to the line-up of ministers by the end of the year.

They have leaned on their gut instinct and

comments from the Prime Minister's "supposed" inner circle to support their prediction.

But as Abdullah showed at a Press conference on Friday, only one man has the answer to the most-often asked question in Malaysia. Everybody else is just guessing.

He left for Los Angeles yesterday to meet wife Datuk Seri Endon Mahmood after attending a biotechnology conference in San Francisco.