

# PM defends decision

KUCHING: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has defended the Government's decision to cancel the "scenic bridge" project, but added that people were free to express their views on the matter.

"The Cabinet had the chance to discuss the issue and unanimously decided against it," he told reporters after opening Universiti Malaysia Sarawak's new Kota Samarahan campus yesterday.

"We believe we made the right decision."

The Prime Minister added that if people were unhappy with the decision, they were free to express their opinions.

He declined to comment further on the issue except to say that the Cabinet had decided.

He said Foreign Minister (Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar) had replied to objections raised by former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Monday.

Dr Mahathir, in a scathing attack on the Government, said it made a mistake in cancelling the project.

In response, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar had said that the Cabinet decided to scrap the project after deliberating on all matters, including legal implications.

In Kuala Lumpur, Culture, Arts and Heritage Minister Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim said the press enjoyed the same freedom now



CLOSE TO RAKYAT: Abdullah acknowledging the presence of villagers who attended the opening of the new Unimas campus in Kota Samarahan near Kuching yesterday. — *STARpic by RAPAEE KAWI*

as it had when Dr Mahathir was the prime minister.

"The set of laws are still the same. Nothing has changed," he said when commenting on Dr Mahathir's criticism.

"I am not aware that some of Dr Mahathir's statements or some of his stories had been excluded (in the media)."

Umno Youth chief said the Government must allow younger

leaders to find ways to resolve longstanding issues between Malaysia and Singapore.

Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein said the country would lose out if it closed its

doors to Singapore.

"The recent incident (the bridge project), however, showed Singapore's unchanging attitude," he said in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.