

Pak Lah on Dr M's renewed attack

Doses of venom

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KEPALA BATAS: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is deeply grieved by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's renewed attacks against him, which the Prime Minister likened to "stronger doses of venom."

Breaking his silence over their meeting last Sunday when Dr Mahathir spoke for two hours on

what he thought was wrong with the present administration, Abdullah said he was saddened that the former premier had continued with his criticisms in the media.

"I feel sad because he has told me all that he wanted to say. I will need time to respond. But he repeated (his criticisms) with stronger doses of venom.

"What else (is there) to do?"

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PM regrets Dr M didn't wait for explanation

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Allahualam (only God knows), he still wants to continue. I had hoped that he could wait for my explanation," he told a press conference at his Hari Raya open house at Dewan Milenium here yesterday.

Abdullah said it upset him that people who came to his open house still talked about the issue, and many had directly asked him about it.

During Sunday's meeting - which Abdullah described as "calm, without any exchange of harsh words" - he said he did not talk much because he wanted Dr Mahathir to say his piece.

"I was not interested in arguing with him. He wanted to convey what was on his mind; and I gave him the opportunity to do so," Abdullah said.

"Some of the other details I had explained in the past. So I did not want to repeat them.

"Tun himself has said before that if the Prime Minister did not want to give explanations, he could ask the ministers to do so on his behalf.

"So, I followed his advice and allowed other ministers to give the necessary explanations."

Abdullah said there were several junctures during the meeting when he felt compelled to debate with Dr Mahathir,

because he disagreed with the latter's views.

"If I did that, it would take time. Tun would not be able to tell me everything. And that will become an issue," he said.

He said Dr Mahathir first asked him whether the country was now a police state.

"I told him that was not true. I have no intention of turning Malaysia into a police state," Abdullah said.

He also told Dr Mahathir that his allegation that Umno members were now afraid to voice their opinions was incorrect.

"Umno members feel happy under my leadership because they are relieved that they can

talk. This democracy was created by Umno leaders themselves," he told newsmen.

On Dr Mahathir's claim that his movements were being restricted, Abdullah said he had not imposed any restrictions.

On the contrary, he said, Dr Mahathir might not be aware that in the days when he was Umno vice-president but was not holding a Cabinet post, people who were trying to please Dr Mahathir had restricted his movements.

"But at that time, I was an elected vice-president and held a party post. If we go by that, I could have gone anywhere," he said.

Abdullah said he also denied claims of his son Kamaluddin's involvement in securing a contract under the Scomi Group to make bus body parts.

On the Sultan of Johor's statement that Dr Mahathir should behave like a "pensioner" and stop "making noise," Abdullah said the Sultan's view reflected the feelings of many people.

Asked if there would be another meeting with Dr Mahathir, Abdullah said: "We will see. Everything is possible, and everything is also impossible. *Allahualam.*"

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