

I'll meet Dr M before Raya

Pak Lah gives no clue to date or venue

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PUTRAJAYA: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has confirmed that he will meet Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad before Hari Raya next week.

The Prime Minister hoped that the meeting would be beneficial to all.

Abdullah, however, kept reporters guessing on when and where the meeting would be held.

"Yes, I am ready to meet him. I can confirm it will be before Raya. My hope is that the meeting will bring a lot of good to both of us and to everybody, God willing," he told reporters after holding bilateral talks with Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont yesterday.

The Prime Minister, who obviously sensed that the large media turnout at his office was to seek his reaction to Dr Mahathir's remarks on Tuesday that he had agreed to meet him, announced before his joint press conference with Surayud that he would meet the press once more after seeing the Thai premier off.

He returned later and when reporters started asking him

questions on the meeting, Abdullah repeatedly teased the media for being "nosy."

Abdullah confirmed that Mubarak, the association of former MPs and state assemblymen, had proposed the meeting.

"Mubarak met Dr Mahathir during a *buka puasa* function and after that they came to see me and told me that it would be better for both of us to meet," he added.

Abdullah explained that before he left for Mecca last Thursday, he had suggested a date for the meeting.

"I proposed a date but he (Dr Mahathir) wanted to change the time, but we could not find a suitable time and date for us to meet.

"However, Tun (Dr Mahathir) said it was okay; let's wait for my return from Mecca, then both of us can set the date," Abdullah added.

Asked whether he would set any condition before meeting Dr Mahathir, Abdullah replied that there would be none.

"The meeting is just between me and him. I will not bring up any issue," he added.

Dr Mahathir had said that he would raise several issues at

the meeting.

To a question whether the meeting would take place in Kuala Lumpur, Abdullah joked: "Where I go, that will be the place. Why are you asking questions like this? This is not the first time I am meeting Tun."

On whether the meeting will bring about an end to Dr Mahathir's criticisms against him, Abdullah replied: "God willing, God willing."

Dr Mahathir hopes that Abdullah will not give him a last-minute notice for the meeting.

"Preferably, I would like a two-day notice. There are only five days left before Hari Raya. I also have my own programmes.

"It would not be nice if I cancelled my appointments at the last minute," he told reporters after presenting Hari Raya goodies to about 40 poor folk at Kampung Naga mosque in Alor Star yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said Mubarak told him he could tell Pak Lah (Abdullah) everything that he had told them.

"So that is what I am going to do," he said.