

Abdullah did not comment, only did some jottings

This is a transcript of the press conference with former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at his residence at The Mines Resort after his meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday.

DR MAHATHIR: We met for two hours. My intention was to convey all my doubts. I managed to express all that was in my heart. All of it. After 20 minutes, he touched on a bit, only a few things, including his son's (Kamaluddin) and (his son-in-law) Khairy's (Jamaluddin) involvement and my allegation that we have a police state.

I said each time I am invited, the police will question and intimidate the people. He said this was not true. He disagreed that we have a police state. He also told me that since I have done this, I have become unpopular and he has lost popularity too because of my criticism and the people that have benefited are (former prime minister Datuk Seri) Anwar Ibrahim and Nik Aziz (Kelantan Menteri Besar and PAS spiritual adviser Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat).

There wasn't much else. For me, my intention was to convey my views, and we will wait and see if there will be changes or not. I brought up and explained the bridge issue but there were no comments from him. Many other issues I brought up were not touched on but he noted everything in his little black book. All the time I was talking he was jotting down. It was thick. I hope following this meeting there will be some kind of action.

Q: Are you happy with the meeting?

A: I can't say I'm happy. I am satisfied

that I have been able to say these things directly to him. People say that I have been making comments from outside, but now I have seen him. I also made it clear that I want to be free to make my criticisms. If I find that anything done is not good for the country, I will continue with my criticisms.

I did explain that this block against my speaking to Umno is not good, not right. I have lost my civic right. Also the idea of postponing the Umno elections is not right. Although I had done it before, it was because the elections came one year before the general election. Now the general election is not even anytime soon, so there is no reason why the election of Umno's office bearers should not be held.

Q: Was it a fruitful discussion?

A: To me it was worthwhile as I got to say it frankly, the way I had said it to

the public also. But the idea that if I have a grouse I go and tell him, it is not workable because people won't know why I have a grouse. So I have to explain why something is wrong.

Q: How did the Prime Minister react when you said you would continue criticising?

A: He didn't say anything.

Q: How do you read that?

A: As far as I am concerned, if he doesn't say anything, I will do it. Whether he says yes or no, I am going to continue. I am going to continue if I feel that something done is not beneficial to the country.

Q: Was it just between the two of you?

A: Yes, just the two of us. Nobody else.

Q: Did you get the replies to the issues you raised?

A: Not all. He mentioned his son's and son-in-law's involvement and he said it is not right - that this accusation that they ring up people and all that, that is not true. But he wants to find out from them whether they did or not.

Q: Are you expecting any feedback?

A: I didn't ask for any.

Q: Did the Prime Minister give you any assurance?

A: I didn't ask for that. I was not there to argue. I just wanted explanations on the things that I am not happy about.

Q: What are you expecting after this?

A: We will see what happens.

Q: If they are not as you expect?

A: I reserve the right to comment and I

also pointed out that in Umno there must have freedom to speak their minds. He is wrong not to allow Umno (members) to speak their minds.

Q: Was there anything you were unhappy about that was not raised?

A: I raised everything, including (the fact) that his name appeared in the list of companies that dealt with the Oil-for-Food programme. He said he had nothing to do with that, that he simply wrote a letter to introduce this man who was married to his sister-in-law.

Q: Were a lot of the issues you raised answered?

A: No... he didn't answer much as there were two hours and I spoke for one-and-a-half hours. There was half an hour left and he touched on several issues and then he stopped, you see, so we went back.

Q: How did the meeting end?

A: It was very cordial. We shook hands.

Q: What was the tone of the meeting?

A: He listened.

Q: Were you able to put across your points to the Prime Minister?

A: Yes, I was able to explain why I am not happy with so many things, including Proton, the APs (approved permits) and (International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri) Rafidah (Aziz).

Q: Will there be a follow-up?

A: It was not scheduled. I didn't say anything about it but he said it'd be good if I come and see him.