

Leaders slam Dr M's actions

KUALA LUMPUR: Cabinet ministers are disappointed and upset with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's renewed criticism of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Several Cabinet ministers said it was wrong for former prime minister Dr Mahathir to come out in the open, especially during the holy month, to "spill the beans" about his closed-door meeting with Abdullah.

They had hoped the four-eyed meeting held at Putrajaya on Sunday would have resolved some issues.

Instead, the ministers now feel the administration needs the "blessings" of Dr Mahathir before moving forward.

The ministers said that more

space and time had to be given to Abdullah to run the country without further interference as it was up to the public to judge and not just one man.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said: "Much more time is needed to address the issues raised by Dr Mahathir."

Najib said the Government had hoped Dr Mahathir would only respond after receiving a lengthy reply from Abdullah.

"I thought, and most people thought, that the meeting was the beginning of an attempt to work things out between Abdullah and Dr Mahathir."

Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin told Bernama that Dr Mahathir made a politi-

cal miscalculation when he revealed the substance of his meeting with Abdullah.

He said that at a time when the leaders, the Malays and Muslims were hoping for a settlement before Hari Raya Aidilfitri, the former prime minister had revealed matters of a sensitive nature discussed at the meeting.

He said that for the Malays it was a sad Aidilfitri this year because they failed to see the settlement that they had been hoping for.

"This is the second time that Dr Mahathir has made a political miscalculation. The first time was when he brought former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim into

Umno to strengthen the party but the move only caused damage to Umno."

Umno information chief Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib pointed out that Abdullah was answerable to more than 20 million Malaysians and not just one man.

Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Azmi Khalid said it sounded as if Tun was telling the current Prime Minister to consult him before implementing major projects.

Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said:

"I regret that if this goes on, the effect on the country, people and party will be quite big.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said: "Give the Prime Minister a chance to lead the country the way he needs to. In any case, the public will be the judge of his performance just like how they judged Dr Mahathir."

Rafidah added: "I have explained the AP issue in Parliament and proven that there was no misappropriation going on."

Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said issues were being raised even before previous ones had been answered, which was not fair.

On Dr Mahathir's accusation that Khairy Jamaluddin had an easy path to the Umno Youth deputy chief post, Hishammud-

din said it was odd that it has been two years since that day and he still has to comment on that issue.

Perak Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Tajol Rosli Ghazali said, "I am still hoping for a reconciliation, which would be significant to the unity of the Malay race and Malaysians."

Works Minister Datuk Seri Samy Vellu said Dr Mahathir should stop criticising Abdullah through the media and wait for a written reply from the Prime Minister.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik said Dr Mahathir "fired his cannon" too soon before giving time to Abdullah and the Government to reply.