

PM SAD AT Dr M'S VIRULENT ATTACKS

Venomous Mahathir

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KEPALA BATAS: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is sad and disappointed that his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad continues to spew "stronger closes of venom" against him despite their four-eyed meeting on Sunday.

Commenting on the brokered meeting, he said it was obvious that Mahathir wanted to continue his verbal attacks against him for reasons only he knew, without allowing him enough time to reply.

Speaking during his well-attended Hari Raya open house at Dewan Milenium Kepala Batas, a relaxed and calm Abdullah said his meeting with Mahathir had been amicable and cordial.

Asked whether he knew why Mahathir continued to go on the offensive, the premier said:

"*Allahmualam.* (Only God knows)."

Mahathir had called two press conferences - one immediately after the pow-wow and the other on Monday - after the meeting. In both conferences, he ran Abdullah down, saying he would continue with his verbal tirade.

The prime minister's take on what transpired on Sunday:

» **The meeting** - "When we met, what he said was mostly what he had said to the newspapers, only difference (was) he was telling it directly to me.

"During our meeting, I gave him every opportunity to speak and spill his guts about whatever he was unhappy about.

"At times, I wanted to interject when I felt I wanted to clarify what he was saying but I refrained from doing that.

"If I had done that, it would have taken time and he would not have been able to finish and tell

me everything he wanted to. I would also have been accused of not giving him the opportunity to have his say.

"It was my intention to let him speak and I did. He wanted two hours to see me and he spoke for one-and-a-half hours and there was half an hour left. At no point did I tell him to stop."

Abdullah said when Mahathir paused, he told him he wanted to talk and commented on some of the issues raised.

» **Police state** - "I said it is not, and never will be."

» **umno gagging leaders** - "I told him this was not true and that it was on the contrary. In fact now, umno leaders and members are all very pleased and happy with my leadership."

» **Tun M's movements curbed** - "It is not like that at all. I told him when I was deputy president I also faced obstructions sometimes. This was

probably done by those who wanted to make him (Mahathir) feel good."

» **PM's son getting many contracts** - "I told him his son was getting even bigger contracts than what Scomi was getting."

Abdullah added that Mahathir had previously said that the prime minister need not answer certain issues as ministers could do it.'

"I am doing just that (following that advice)."

He said he felt sad and disappointed that people were busy talking about this (the squabble) even during Hari Raya. He said many came up to him to ask about this, some offering solutions, while others offered suggestions.

Abdullah said he would have to take some time to reply to Mahathir in detail.

Asked about the Sultan of Johor's support for him, Abdullah said it reflected the sentiments of

the people who had lent him moral support and told him to be patient.

» **End to squabble?** - "I don't know, he's the one.. I have promised the people and I must fulfil these promises. The Ninth Malaysia Plan was just launched on March 31 not two years ago as mentioned by Tun.

"It will take at least until mid-2007 before some positive results can be seen and surely the people will benefit from this."

» **Another meeting?** - "Maybe yes, maybe not."

» **Police state** - "We have no intention of making Malaysia a police state, we are a sovereign nation, governed by a democratic government.

"This is a government chosen by the people and the laws are passed by Parliament... we do not oppress or control or restrict our people as long as they abide by the laws."