

PM ready to meet

Dr M before Hari Raya

by **R. Manirajan**
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is ready to meet his predecessor, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, before Hari Raya Puasa.

"I am also ready to meet him but there is no need for a third party to be involved," he said when asked if he was willing to meet Mahathir and whether a third party should be present.

Abdullah said Mubarak, the association of former members of Parliament and state assemblymen, met him during a *buka puasa* event before he left to perform his *umrah* in Mecca last week.

"Mubarak members met me to discuss [the possibility of] meeting Tun, and I told them that I am ready," he said.

"A date, time and place were fixed but due to certain circumstances and

work schedule ... it was postponed."

No conditions were imposed on the proposed meeting between him and Mahathir, Abdullah told reporters. Earlier, he had met new Thai Prime Minister Gen Surayud Chulanont, who was here on a one-day visit.

Asked when and where the meeting will take place, he said "before Hari Raya ... I don't know."

On whether there was a need for a third party to be involved in the meeting, he said this was not necessary.

"I am not going to bring up any issue. I will listen to what Tun has to say... I have two ears," he said in reply to a question if he will be raising any issues.

On Tuesday, Mahathir said in Langkawi he was willing and ready to meet Abdullah and express his grievances and was waiting for him to give the green light

"At the meeting, I will raise again

the issues that I have been keeping in my heart since I left the government," Mahathir said.

Asked if he expected the meeting to be positive, Abdullah said it was his hope that it will bring good to Mahathir and him, as well as Umno and the people in general.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak welcomed Abdullah's willingness to meet Mahathir. "We see this and accept it as the prime minister's sincerity in being willing to meet even though the criticisms were tough against him. It's a good sign and a character that is really appreciated," he told reporters after paying a courtesy call on Surayud at Putrajaya Marriott Hotel.

Najib said the meeting is timely and "it was the wish of most of the Umno members who wanted to see both the leaders sit down and speak heart to heart because the matter can't be resolved through open statements."