

# EXPLAIN YOURSELF, PM TELLS KUAN YEW

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PUTRAJAYA: Malaysia wants an explanation.

The Prime Minister will write to Singapore's Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew seeking an explanation for his remarks that Malaysian Chinese had been "marginalised" and were "compliant".

The comments could cause racial tension, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday, adding that a stable Malaysia was crucial to Singapore's well-being.

"I will write a letter to him. I want him to explain his statement," Abdullah told reporters at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport upon arrival from London, after a two-week working trip abroad.

He was asked if he would demand an apology from Lee, whose statement has been criticised by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak and Chinese politicians, including Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik.

"Najib said it was a naughty statement and I agree. But it is also a statement which can

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Abdullah

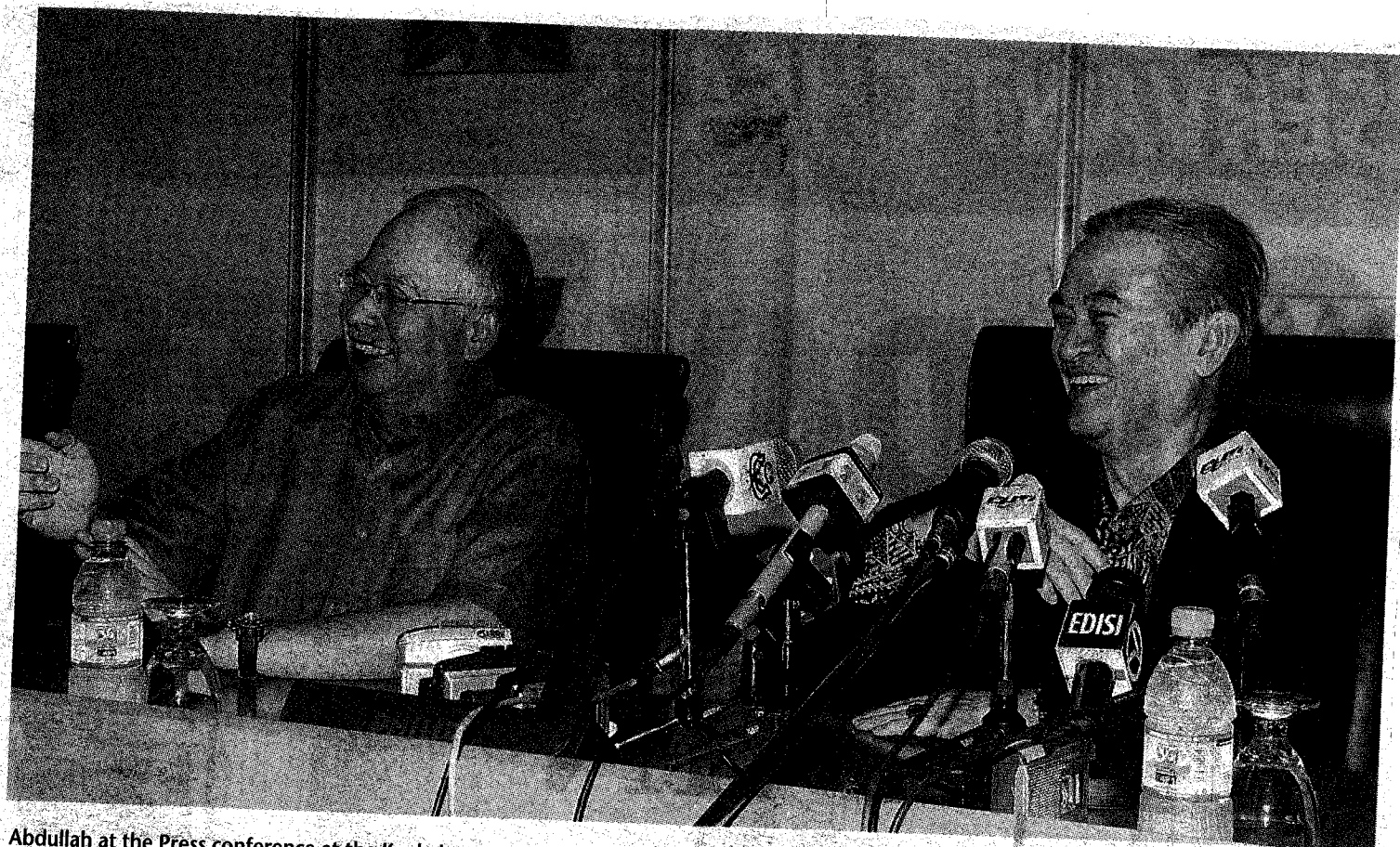
incite Malaysian citizens of Chinese descent. It is not fair at all, for a neighbouring country to say that.

"Lee should understand that our relationship with Singapore is one that has to be nurtured well. He should appreciate the stability we have on our side because if we are not stable, Singapore will have problems," Abdullah said. Lee made his remarks at a forum on the sidelines of the World Bank-International Monetary Fund meeting which the republic hosted last week.

He reportedly said that it was vital for Chinese-dominated Singapore to stand up against its bigger, Muslim-majority neighbours, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Lee said the attitudes of both countries were shaped by the way they treated their ethnic Chinese minorities.

"Our neighbours both have problems with their Chinese. They are successful. They are hardworking and therefore they are systematically marginalised," he said. Lee also said the Chinese in neighbouring



Abdullah at the Press conference at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport upon arrival from London yesterday. With him is Najib.

## Abdullah: Kuan Yew's statement not welcome

□ FROM PAGE 1

countries were compliant, and that likewise, Indonesia and Malaysia wanted Singapore to be compliant.

Abdullah said Lee's statement was "not welcomed" and the republic's founding father had appeared to have no qualms about making such a highly-charged remark.

"Singapore, too, has problems in terms of race relations," said Abdullah.

"Not everything there is 100 per cent perfect."

The Prime Minister arrived at 5.15pm and was greeted by Najib, Home Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad and Deputy Internal Security Minister Datuk Johari Baharom. Also present were Umno information chief Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan and a crowd of over 100 party supporters.

While abroad, Abdullah had at-

tended the Asia-Europe Meeting in Finland, the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Cuba and the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Asked how he felt upon returning to Malaysia in the wake of tumultuous events in the region such as the coup in Thailand, he praised Malaysians for being calm.

"I am grateful that whatever happens, our citizens are calm and careful."

He said foreign investors were

still confident of Malaysia's growth potential and he expected the local economy to do better, along with the global economy, as oil prices were projected to fall in the coming months.

Abdullah wished all Muslims *Selamat Berpuasa* and urged them to practise self-control.

He also said it would be "different" not having his late wife Datin Seri Endon Mahmood around.

"I have to cope with it. It is a reality. It's okay, my family is with me."

>>TURN TO PAGE 2, COL 2