

PM: I have my own style

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BANGKOK: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi says he has a different style of running the country compared to his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

"We're two different persons. We have our ways of doing things, of what needs to be done and how things should be done. I am not concerned about that. I have been given the biggest mandate ever obtained by any Malaysian leader," Abdullah said in the column "Global Viewpoint" in the Bangkok Post yesterday.

The Prime Minister said this when asked about his philosophy of leadership by a group of foreign journalists attending a programme organised by the Institute of Strategic and International Studies in Putrajaya last month.

However, he said, the nation was moving towards becoming a developed country by 2020, the vision of Dr Mahathir, and added that his Government was a continuation of the previous administration.

Abdullah, who took office on Oct 31, 2003, said although his Government held a strong majority of more than 90%, he allowed backbenchers in parliament to come up with very tough questions for members of the Government.

"I told them that your role is to be constructive in your criticisms. This is not only the role of the Opposition," he added.

Although many have said he was taking Malaysia back several years by returning to agriculture, he said the possibilities of making agriculture a full



MAKING A POINT: Abdullah speaking at the monthly assembly of the Prime Minister's Department in Putrajaya on Jan 9. With him were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Najib Tun Abdul Razak and other leaders. — Bernamapic

growth sector existed with the introduction of biotechnology.

On corruption, Abdullah said it must be curbed although it was not easy as evidence and facts must be established before a person could be prosecuted.

On the main economic challenges to Malaysia, Abdullah said it was the competitiveness and the ability to compete for everything, including the markets

and the resources.

Although China has emerged as a competitor and is seen as a threat by many countries, he said Malaysia regarded China as a friend and an opportunity.

He said Malaysia had to find a niche for itself and something that could do favourably vis-a-vis China and not the same as was being done by the country,

like going for production in low-cost industries using low-cost labour.

As for Asean, Abdullah, who chaired the Asean Summit and the East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur last month, said Malaysia wanted to see it as a group and a single unit that could face the competition and position itself favourably vis-a-vis China and India. — Bernama