

Conference put off due to Abdullah's schedule

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Building Bridges Conference scheduled for this week here was postponed due to the prime minister's busy schedule.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the international religious conference was postponed because he had prior pressing matters to attend to.

"I have an important role to play in the conference so I didn't want it to be held when I was not around," he added.

"So we will have to find some other date for the conference," he said at a news conference after attending the opening of the 61st MIC general assembly at the Putra World Trade Centre yesterday.

The *Times Online* reported in London on Friday that the sudden cancellation of the conference had set back attempts by the archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, to foster Muslim-Christian dialogue.

The conference was started in the wake of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks and is an annual get-together of Christian and Muslim academics to find theological understanding.

Asked about his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's criticism of him in an interview with an online news portal, Abdullah declined to be drawn into a slanging match.

He said he was focused on the job ahead "to achieve the most important objective that Tun Mahathir left us, Vision 2020".

On the impact of asking the Asian Football Confederation to allow Manchester United to play a game here, he said he did not think it would affect the Asian Cup Tournament, to be held from July 7 to 29.

"The Asian Cup series in Malaysia will have ended by that time and will not affect the match. I hope they understand that this is what the government wants."