

'My liberal policy vulnerable'

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BANGKOK: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said accusations of nepotism against him was one way of bringing him down and eroding his credibility.

The Prime Minister said he realised that the allegations and accusations of nepotism against him was because of his leadership style, which allowed others to comment and criticise, as well as more space for democratic debate and discussion in the media.

In an interview with *Bangkok*

Post editor-in-chief, Pichai Chuensuksawadi at his residence in Putrajaya, Abdullah was also asked how he felt about allegations toward his son Kamaluddin Abdullah and son-in-law Khairy Jamaluddin.

"I think the accusation of nepotism against a leader is one way of bringing him down, of eroding his credibility. They will do anything," he said.

Abdullah said Kamaluddin worked overseas and got some contracts with Petronas through

open international tenders and also bought some companies which he wanted because of their engineering and machine-tooling capabilities.

"He does not build the company organically, he goes for mergers and acquisitions. That's his style of business. Although many people have come and asked him to go into joint ventures with government-linked companies, he says 'No, I have enough money, I am rich,'" said Abdullah.

Asked if his leadership style of allowing more debate opened him to a lot of criticism, Abdullah said:

"I did mention that the old man practically smashed Khairy's pot of rice. That's something about which I am very sad. He has sold his interest in ECM Libra (an investment bank group). Sold it at a loss. Now he has some debts to settle."

He said Khairy had wanted to work in Hong Kong but it was

too far away and then he decided to go to Singapore.

"By that time he was already in Umno Youth. I posed him a question: 'Are you going into politics or are you going into business?' You cannot do both together, especially if you are going to operate in Singapore."

"That was the time they made all sorts of news about him. I thought, what the hell are you talking about? They made all sorts of noise so as to disqualify him. To make him scared."

Abdullah said freedom to speak should not be used to tell lies and slander people.

He reiterated that he had not stopped the drive against corruption which was part of his reform agenda.

Asked on the number of ongoing investigations, Abdullah said there were more than 100 now, and that he had told them to be very careful, to ensure fairness to everyone and that they should have enough evidence. — Bernama