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No such thing, says Pak Lah

PM: There was no gentleman's agreement between me and Mahathir

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KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said there was no gentleman's agreement between him and his predecessor Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he (Abdullah) be prime minister only for a term.

"No such thing," the Prime Minister told reporters yesterday after he launched Pavilion, the latest upmarket shopping mall here.

Asked why he thought Dr Mahathir felt that there was such an agreement, he said, "Each person has his own views."

When reporters pressed him further on the so-called gentleman's agreement, Abdullah brushed it aside saying, "Why are you so interested in this? There was nothing."

Three days ago, the former prime minister had claimed that he had a gentleman's agreement when he handed over power to Abdullah in 2003, that the latter would stay on for one term only and subsequently pass over the mantle to Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

On the general election, Abdullah indicated that it was close.

Asked whether he had received inspiration to call for the election, he replied, "I am about to."

He said he would pick competent people, who wanted to serve the rakyat, as candidates. On Dr



New city landmark: Abdullah beating a drum as a conductor directs other drummers at the entrance of the Pavilion in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Behind Abdullah and Datin Seri Jeanne Abdullah are Tan Sri Zainol Mahmood, chairman of Urusharta Cemerlang Sdn Bhd which owns Pavilion, and Datin Cindy Lim, executive director of Malton Bhd, the developer.

Mahathir's call that Barisan Nasional field only clean candidates, Abdullah said this was his plan all along.

"We, too, want only clean candidates," he added.

On Dr Mahathir's hope that peo-

ple should use their power as voters to change Barisan and Umno, Abdullah said it was always up to the rakyat to decide what they wanted.

Asked whether the crackdown on the Hindu Rights Action Front

(Hindraf) would have an impact on the elections, Abdullah said, "there might be a little bit but nothing more than that."

Reports have suggested that Indians voters were angry with the Government over its action on



Run-up to the elections

Hindraf and might not back the ruling coalition overwhelmingly as was the practice in the past.

On a different matter, Abdullah said his meeting yesterday with MCA Youth, which lasted more than an hour, was productive.

"We had a lively discussion on many issues that reflect their concern," he added.

In Putrajaya, Najib reiterated his support and loyalty for Abdullah, **MAZWIN NIK ANIS** reports.

"I am committed to support the Prime Minister and to be loyal to him.

"At the same time, my focus is on the general election to ensure that Barisan Nasional wins big," he told reporters after opening a seminar for Felda mosque officials yesterday.

Asked if he was aware of any gentleman's agreement made when Dr Mahathir stepped down, Najib said, "I don't know about the agreement. You have to ask the parties concerned."

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