

IT'S ON PM TO MEET Dr M TODAY

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KUALA LUMPUR: The "peace talks" between Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad are expected to be held today.

Sources told the *New Sunday Times* that the date and the venue for the meeting were conveyed to the former prime minister

yesterday. There has been swirling speculation about the meeting ever since Abdullah said that he would meet Dr Mahathir before Hari Raya to allow him to air his grievances. But there is a growing feeling that putting the one-on-one meeting under the spotlight could lead to unreal expectations.

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'Leaders should be allowed to meet quietly'

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Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir yesterday cautioned that the all-consuming focus on the meeting could be counter-productive.

He believes that his father and the PM should be allowed to meet quietly and suggests that the discussion slated to take place before Hari Raya be the ice-breaker for a series of talks.

"There should not be undue pressure on either side, it is already hyped up as it is. I just hope there is frank and sincere discussions between the two," he told the *New Sunday Times*.

Mokhzani, the eldest son of the former Prime Minister, noted that so much speculation had been flying around, some of which were

untrue.

He was amused by claims that early negotiations to get the two men to meet saw Abdullah's side represented by him and Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad, while Dr Mahathir was represented by Umno veteran Datuk Khalid Abdullah.

"I am my father's son. I actually never met Datuk Radzi. Everybody is speculating, so I let them speculate."

Mokhzani noted that three members of Mubarak (council of elected representatives), former Pendang MP Datuk Othman Abdul, Datuk Abu Zahar Ujang and ex-minister Tan Sri Zaleha Ismail, approached him with the proposal for the PM and the former PM to

meet.

"It was a proposal which was sincere and well-intentioned, and they asked whether I could carry it to my father. He said okay immediately, but said he wanted to meet Mubarak first."

The proposed meeting between Dr Mahathir and Abdullah follows nearly six months of criticisms by the former PM against his successor. Dr Mahathir has accused the PM of reversing his policies and nepotism.

Abdullah has so far responded to the attacks sparingly, believing that a public slanging match would serve no purpose.

Mokhzani said he did not know details of the meeting.

Sources said that they expected the meeting to be held today (Sun-

day) at the Umno headquarters.

"I got a positive response from my father, and the rest was left to Mubarak to continue. They had more meetings after that and have achieved success in getting both sides to agree to the meeting."

"It is now up to the two gentlemen to meet, be open with each other and discuss issues which have been brought up."

On Tuesday, Dr Mahathir said he was willing to sit and talk with Abdullah but said he would leave the date and place of the meeting to the Prime Minister.

The following day the Prime Minister said he would have a one-on-one meeting with Dr Mahathir within the next few days, with no mediators and no conditions during the session.