

Dr M should stop making noise, says Johor Sultan

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■ **By Ravi Nambiar**
news@nst.com.my

JOHOR BARU: The Sultan of Johor said yesterday that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad should behave like a pensioner and stop "making noise".

He also called on the people to join him in supporting the administration of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

In an impromptu speech after Aidilfitri prayers at the Sultan Abu Bakar Mosque here, he said he was sad and disappointed at the continuing criticism of Abdullah's leadership by his predecessor.

"I have something to say," Sultan Iskandar al-Marhum Sultan Ismail told Muslims as he took over the microphone after the prayers and sermon by the imam.

He said he was saddened by the feud, especially since he knew both leaders personally and considered them as his *sahabat* (friends).

(Abdullah and Dr Mahathir are recipients of the Darjah Kerabat Johor Yang Amat Dihormati, Pangkat Pertama (DK1).

(The DK or The Most Esteemed Family Order of Johor, is normally awarded to royalty, but it is occasionally given to

commoners who have given valuable service to the Ruler and the state).

Alluding to Dr Mahathir's recent attacks against Abdullah, the Sultan said: "If one has already been pensioned, just behave like a pensioner, what is the use of making more noise?"

Among those in the congregation were the Tunku Mahkota Johor, Tunku Ibrahim Ismail; Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, state executive councillors and heads of government departments and community leaders.

During Umno's 60th anniversary celebrations at Istana Johor in May, the sultan had tried to patch things up between Abdullah and Dr Mahathir by asking them to be photographed together in a group picture with him and other Umno leaders.

Dr Mahathir told reporters on Monday — the day after a peace meeting with Abdullah — that he would continue with his criticism to "save Umno from a bad leadership", and until there was change.

He has escalated his attacks on the current administration in the past six months, accusing Abdullah of jeopardising economic expansion and achieving nothing since taking over in 2003.

Among his key grouses are the scrapping of several of his pet projects, including building a bridge to replace the Causeway across the Johor Strait.

Two Singapore ministers called on the Sultan at Istana Bukit Serene on Tuesday.

Education Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Minister in the Prime

Minister's Office Lim Swee Say came with their spouses.

It has been a long-established tradition for Singapore leaders to make trips across the Causeway to call on the Sultan for Hari Raya.

The visits underscore the importance of the bilateral ties between Singapore and Malaysia which have been growing warmer in the past few years, after a series of high-level visits by the top leaders of both countries.

The Sultan showed off his collection of baby crocodiles. Then it was off to a sumptuous two-hour lunch.

"There is great friendship on both sides — a lot of renewing of facts and acquaintances and happenings and updating each other on what's happening on both sides," Shanmugaratnam told reporters.

Lim, who was making his first visit to the palace as a member of the Singapore Cabinet, said it was a testimony of the special relationship between Singapore and Johor, as well as Singapore and Malaysia.

"I think we live in a fast changing world.

"But I hope, and both sides hope, that this special relationship will keep strengthening," he said.