

I'll meet Pak Lah

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Dr M agrees to a meeting to voice his grievances

By JOCELINE TAN
and SIRA HABIBU
newsdesk@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: A fresh attempt is being made to get Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to end their feud ahead of Hari Raya and the Umno general assembly next month.

The mediation effort is being quietly organised by a group of Umno veterans who want to bring the two leaders together for a private meeting.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir revealed that the proposal to meet the Prime Minister was made by Mubarak, the association of former Members of Parliament and State Assemblymen, which had advised the former premier to express his sentiments to Abdullah.

Dr Mahathir said he was ready to meet Abdullah before Hari Raya to tell him about "all my grievances and after that, it is up to the Prime Minister".

"The Mubarak members asked me to pour my heart out to the

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Mahathir: Only thing to decide is date and time

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Prime Minister. I have agreed, and the only thing is the date and time. It is up to the Prime Minister now. I understand he has a lot of work," he told newsmen in Langkawi.

Asked about the grievances, he said: "There are many. I have spoken of them before."

Hari Raya is expected to fall on Monday or Tuesday, while the Umno general assembly is set to begin on Nov 13 at the Putra World Trade Centre here.

Sources said a meeting scheduled for last Wednesday evening was put off at the eleventh hour on Dr Mahathir's suggestion because of their tight schedules.

Both had their own *buka puasa* appointments and Abdullah was scheduled to fly off at 5am the next morning to perform the *umrah*.

Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad had earlier hinted at such an effort, saying "something nice" would happen between the two men during the fasting month.

However, he refused to elaborate when pressed for details.

It is understood that Radzi, who is also Home Affairs Minister, is working behind the scenes to arrange a new date for the meeting.

An earlier effort to bring together Dr Mahathir and Abdullah to end their fallout and said to involve former Umno secretary-general Tun Khalil Yaakob, failed because some Umno leaders felt it was not appropriate to involve Khalil, who is now the Yang di-Pertua Negri of Malacca.

Although the mediation move in July was denied, Dr Mahathir later confirmed that there had been such an effort.

Several Umno leaders con-

tacted yesterday said they looked forward to the meeting but cautioned that the matter should be handled delicately.

A Cabinet minister, who declined to be named, said he hoped the "effort is for real this time" as it would be good for the country's political stability.

Umno information chief Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib described the development as positive for Umno and the country.

"It's better for the two leaders to sit down and talk rather than for Tun Mahathir to go around the country criticising the Government. In that way, they can sort out these issues in private rather than in the media," he said.

As to whether the Prime Minister would be open to the meeting, Muhammad said: "Pak Lah is always prepared to meet people for the good of the country."