

Pak Lah breaks silence

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'I have no ill-feeling towards Dr Mahathir,' says PM

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PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday broke his silence over Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's criticisms against his administration, saying he was initially hurt but harboured no ill-feeling towards his predecessor.

"Well, certainly you do feel hurt but you overcome it very quickly," Abdullah said in his first press conference after a 17-day break in Australia.

"Why should I have any ill-feelings towards anybody?"

"What is wrong, we will put right. The Government has its own perception and its own views. We made decisions which we thought were the best at that time."

On his relationship with Dr Mahathir, Abdullah said whenever they met, Mahathir would greet him and they would shake hands.

"That's the kind of relationship. If we have time, we speak, may be exchange two or three words. I don't have

any problem," he added.

A relaxed Abdullah took questions from the floor ranging from his relationship with Dr Mahathir, the 9th Malaysia Plan, Israeli attack on Lebanon and the tsunami in Indonesia. The press conference lasted about 45 minutes.

Abdullah spoke about his last meeting with Dr Mahathir in Japan, saying he had asked to meet his predecessor.

"I knew he was at the hotel. I could have chosen not to see him but I decided to see him because I know Tun and (Tun) Dr Siti Hasmah very well," Abdullah said.

"I did not ask him to see me, I went to see him as *silaratulrahim* (goodwill). I asked Tun how he was," Abdullah added.

Asked whether he was willing to sit down with Dr Mahathir, Abdullah replied: "I have been doing this before. I don't think there is a problem."

He also said he was aware of private initiatives to mediate matters between him and Dr Mahathir.

What was important, he added, was giving information



FULL HOUSE: A calm and collected Abdullah taking questions from the floor during the 45-minute press conference at his office in Putrajaya yesterday.

to the people.

He said: "The situation is changing all the time. People's needs are changing.

"Issues are changing, such as

fuel and, now, sugar. We are trying hard not to increase the sugar price, otherwise there will be a spiralling effect.

"We have to think of such

things, and we make decisions. If the people do not like it, we will be in trouble. We will be at the receiving end come election time."