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Ghafar says he fully backs Dr M

PENANG, Mon. — Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Ghafar Baba said today there is no rift between him and Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad.

"On the contrary, I fully back Dr Mahathir as he is a very capable leader who has brought much development to the country," he said.

Encik Ghafar said there was talk that he and the prime minister were not on good terms because when Dr Mahathir went to Lusaka recently to meet black African leader Nelson Mandela, he had gone to New York.

He added in a lighter vein that if he wanted to wrest power as had been rumoured, he would have stayed back and "seized control."

Encik Ghafar was speaking to about 1,000 Barisan Nasional leaders and workers, who had helped in the recent Pantai Merdeka by-election, at the Sultan Abdul Hamid memorial hall.

"Dr Mahathir is a leader who knows how to find the money for development. I'll give my support to any leader who can bring development. Whether I'm the deputy prime minister or not does not matter," he added.

On the Barisan's reduced majority in the by-election, he said this was due to many of the Barisan supporters staying home as they did not feel the by-election was important.

He said the voter turnout would be better in the general election.

Earlier, at a briefing at the Kuala Muda district office, he approved \$1.8 million for various development projects for the Kuala Muda district.