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Dr M: I'm no senior minister

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LANGKAWI, Fri. Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad laughed off suggestions that he was still instrumental in decisions made by his successor Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"When I said I would retire, I meant it.

"I am not a senior minister," he said at the Telaga Harbour Park in Pantai Kok, today.

He was referring to comments by some opposition leaders and their supporters that the appointment of Datuk Seri Najib Razak as Deputy Prime Minister was a sure sign that Abdullah was following Dr Mahathir's directives.

Dr Mahathir said his only contacts with Abdullah since his retirement on Oct 31 were during functions which both attended together.

He said Abdullah had not once consulted him for advice on who should become the Deputy Prime Minister or on any other matter.

"If we are at the same function, then I will see him. But if not, we rarely meet. I have never said anything nor has he once asked me on party matters (since the retirement)," he said.

Abdullah appointed Najib as Deputy Prime Minister on Jan 7.

Asked about his appointment as Kedah Barisan Nasional adviser for the general election, Dr Mahathir said: "I promised to help them (Kedah BN) before and I always keep my promises. I have never made empty promises."

Yesterday, Kedah BN chairman Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain said that Dr Mahathir had agreed to be appointed as the coalition's adviser in the general election.

Syed Razak, who is also Kedah Menteri Besar, said Dr Mahathir would be visiting all Umno divisions in the State after the BN's election machinery is launched on Jan 31.

Asked what kind of advice he would give to the coalition, Dr Mahathir said: "Work hard."

Asked about his visit to Langkawi, he said: "I am not visiting. I am on holiday."