

Umno all for mediator

KUALA LUMPUR: Umno backs the idea of having a party veteran to help diffuse the discord between Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Party vice-president Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam said a mediator would help make everything go well between the Prime Minister and his predecessor.

"It is a good idea to have a peacemaker to mend ties between the two," he said. He was commenting on a suggestion by Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin that an Umno veteran should be roped in to resolve the rift between Abdullah and Dr Mahathir

Zainuddin did not name the veteran he has in mind but said he had met both Abdullah and Dr Mahathir and both were receptive to the idea.

Mohd Ali, who is Malacca Chief Minister, said yesterday that he had also proposed a mediator to intervene in the matter when Abdullah visited the state on June 25.

He said he spoke personally to Abdullah on the matter.

Umno Youth has also welcomed the move to bring in a third party to persuade the prime minister and former prime minister to end their feud.

Movement chief Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein hoped the two men would accept the

suggestion and turn their focus to the Umno agenda that was set years ago by party founder Datuk Onn Jaafar.

"Many people feel it is a great loss to the party if the situation continues. That is why various efforts are being made to mend the ties between them," he said, brushing aside suggestions among Umno members to make Dr Mahathir a senator.

"If that was so, he would have suggested it even before he retired (as prime minister), said Hishammuddin, who is Education Minister.

He added that a senator's post for Dr Mahathir would not stop him from speaking out and neither would it give his critics more opportunities to reply.

"So, there seems little point for such an appointment," said Hishammuddin:

Umno supreme council member Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, in welcoming the move to get a mediator to end the impasse between Abdullah and his predecessor, said this would lead to a peaceful end to the feud.

"Everybody wants to see a solution to the disagreement between the two, as both are highly respected leaders" he told reporters in Kota Baru.

Ahmad Zahid, the deputy Tourism Minister, urged state party leaders and division heads to go down to the ground to clarify matters and warned PAS not to interfere.



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