

'Mukhriz went against Umno Youth'

DATUK Mukhriz Mahathir was "not right" in claiming that Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's presidential speech at the Umno general assembly on Wednesday offered nothing new.

The prime minister said the Youth committee member and son of arch-critic and former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had not kept with the spirit of the Umno Youth resolution.

"They (the Umno Youth leadership) told me about it. It (what Mukhriz said) is not in keeping with the spirit and letter of the resolution that Umno Youth had tabled," he told a Press conference yesterday.

Mukhriz, also chairman of the youth wing's International Relations and Non-Governmental Organisa-

tion bureau, was quoted as saying that he was also a "little bit" disappointed with the speech.

Abdullah felt that Mukhriz "had said something which I think was not right at all".

Asked if Mukhriz should resign from the Youth committee, Abdullah said it was up to him.

"It is a matter for him (to decide). Why are you asking me to decide for him? I don't decide for him," he said.

He said it was up to Umno Youth to decide how they wanted to handle the problem.

"What is obvious is that he has gone against the Umno Youth position," he added.

Asked whether he was worried that the public would not dare to criticise him for fear of being criti-

cised in return, Abdullah, who is also Finance Minister, said: "Just now, some people spoke on the GLCs (government-linked companies), that's a criticism of me."

Asked whether he was still open to criticism, he said: "Why are you saying that I'm not open to criticism?"

Umno Youth chief Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said Mukhriz had crossed the line by deriding the party president.

"Now, the ball is in Mukhriz's court. We'll have to see what he does from now," Hishammuddin said at the sidelines of the party assembly, when asked by reporters if disciplinary action would be taken against Mukhriz.

Hishammuddin, who is also Education Minister, said he had given

Mukhriz a lot of leeway due to the latter's "special position" as Dr Mahathir's son.

Asked why he felt Mukhriz had "crossed the line" when Abdullah had said that members were free to speak at the assembly, Hishammuddin said Mukhriz's statement was not in line with the Umno Youth stance.

On whether he was pressured to reprimand Mukhriz, he said no one could pressure him to do something he did not want to.

"I have spoken to a lot of Youth exco members, including those close to him (Mukhriz). There is a lot of anger among exco members," he said.

Mukhriz, meanwhile, declined to comment.