

# Dr M leaves decision on his role to govt, Umno

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LANGKAWI: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad is leaving it to the government and Umno to decide on his role as adviser to several government agencies and as a party member.

Stressing that it was the prerogative of the government and the party, the former prime minister said he would abide by any decision made by them.

"I hear the calls and that is their right. If they want to throw me out, they can do so.

"I will abide by their decision. I will abide by all without protest," he said when asked about a suggestion by Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid that he should relinquish his post as adviser to several government-linked companies including Petronas, Proton and the Langkawi Development Authority since he had been critical of the government.

Kedah Umno Youth chief Mohd Rawi Abdul Hamid had also recently suggested stern action, including a warning and a suspen-

sion, against Dr Mahathir for his attacks on the government.

Dr Mahathir and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, were here yesterday on a day-long visit to inspect several on-going development projects.

Asked for his opinion on the call and protests from numerous quarters over his unrelenting attacks on the government, he said: "I don't think about it."

Asked if the call for him to relinquish his advisory posts was an attempt to sideline him, he said he did not have any opinion on it.

"That is their right. So, it is their right, I don't know but let's hot spin too much. Just report whatever I said," he said.

Earlier, when asked for his comment on the current political events, he cynically responded by saying that everything was fine.

"All is smooth. Moving smoothly and if you don't believe, read the *Straits Times* (New *Straits Times*)," he said.

Then, looking towards the NST reporter, who had posed the question, he asked: "*You Straits Times?* (New *Straits Times*). Then you should know. What is there to ask.

All is moving smoothly and efficiently."

Asked about the position of Umno considering his spat with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, he said, also in a cynical tone, that Umno was enjoying very strong support from the people.

"According to news reports, Umno is getting overwhelming support from the people and that is based on what I have read so far.

"I don't know, I read the newspapers and the people support Umno."

On whether he would attend the Umno general assembly, Dr Mahathir said he was still thinking about it.

"I have received invitations to attend many functions during the assembly, including the dinners hosted by the president and his deputy," he said.

However, he expressed disappointment that the hosts of two events had suddenly withdrawn their invitations to him.

He said he was to have gone to Johor yesterday for a function but the host, Perkida (a Malay-based non-governmental organisation)

withdrew the invitation last week.

Another Baling-based NGO had also invited him for an event on Nov 3, but he learnt yesterday that it had also withdrawn the invitation.

Asked if any reasons were given for the withdrawals, he said there was none.

"This is because I am not popular and that's why they did so. Also, because they did so voluntarily without any pressure from any parties.

"Maybe next year or 10 years from now, they might invite me again," he said

In jest, he said he was thankful that Datuk Abu Bakar Taib (MP for Langkawi) had invited him for lunch.

"If he wants to withdraw the invitation now, I will go back," he said, drawing laughter from his wife and several others, including Lada general manager Kamaruz-zatnan Abd Ghani.

Earlier, he said he was in Langkawi to visit the various tourist spots and hoped that he would be allowed to visit the island when he was no longer Lada adviser.