

Dr M in stable condition

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad suffered a mild heart attack yesterday, triggered possibly by too much travelling and feasting during the festive season.

He is in stable condition at the National Heart Institute (UN) and is likely to remain there over the next few days, throwing into doubt whether he will attend the Umno general assembly next week.

Doctors do not think that he needs surgery but have put the former prime minister under mild sedation. The *International Herald Tribune* newspaper reported earlier this week that Dr Mahathir's doctors had told him that he had three blockages in his heart.

Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir said that his father had been feeling tired by "excessive travelling" to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and New Zealand in the last few days. He returned home from New Zealand on Wednesday and entertained several thousand guests at a Hari Raya open house in Seri Kembangan.

At 11.30pm, he complained of chest pain, said Mokhzani, attributing it to the hectic travel schedule and the result of breaking his strict diet regime during the festive season.

Dr Mahathir felt the sharp pain move to his back and arms — the same type of sensation he felt in 1989 when he suffered a heart attack.

Consultant cardiologist Datuk Dr Mohd Nasir Muda arrived at his home about 3am yesterday and the former prime minister was rushed to the UN.

Dr Mahathir had a coronary artery bypass surgery in 1989 and has been having regular medical check-ups in IJN.

He was last admitted to UN in December last year.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi visited Dr Mahathir at 2.15pm yesterday but the former prime minister was sedated and asleep at the time. Abdullah spoke with family members.

Mokhzani said: "The prime minister was very concerned over my father's condition and told doctors to make sure that everything possible was done."

In recent months, Dr Mahathir has emerged as Abdullah's chief critic, accusing him of reversing his policies, nepotism and mismanaging the economy.

Despite Abdullah's explanations, the former prime minister has continued beating the drumbeat of complaints and allegations.

Dr Mahathir accepted an invitation to attend the ruling party's general assembly next week but it remains unclear if he will be discharged from hospital by then.

Mokhzani said his father's health would be the priority. "I would think if the doctors say he has to rest here then he has to rest here. That is a priority."

In an interview with Reuters in September, Dr Mahathir said his feud with Abdullah was taking its toll. "It is a strain, of course, for an old man," he said.

Mokhzani did not think that the feud was behind the mild heart attack. "If you look at his track record, he is a person who knows how to manage stress and pressure very well," he said.