

Dr M to remain as advisor

KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad will remain as advisor to several government agencies, including Proton and Petronas, despite calls by some quarters within Umno for him to be removed from these posts.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Umno supreme council had taken note of the request from Kedah Umno but decided to let Dr Mahathir stay on as advisor.

The Umno president said this to reporters after chairing a supreme council meeting yesterday.

Kedah Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid had suggested that Dr Mahathir's advisory role be terminated after the former prime minister launched another round of attacks against Abdullah in the wake of their four-eyed meeting recently.

Kedah Umno Youth had even proposed that Dr Mahathir's Umno membership be suspended.

To a question whether Dr Mahathir would be immune from party action, Abdullah said "for the time being" there would be no action taken against him.

"Nobody is immune. It is a matter for us to decide if there's going to be action or not," he said.

The Prime Minister said the Government would continue to reply openly to whatever criticisms Dr Mahathir makes.

"Dr Mahathir has been criticising openly and so, we will give answers to whatever questions we deem appropriate also openly, so that the answers will be understood by all," he added.

Abdullah denied that the party was afraid to act against Dr Mahathir.

"He should know his limits. There is no need to ask us what we are going to do or when we are going to do (it). We always listen and get reports on his

activities," he said.

"It is not a question of being afraid. We don't think we'd like to take action against him now. Let him say whatever he wants to say so that we can hear all that he would like to say."

Abdullah pointed out that if the party took action against the former Umno president, then as a party member "he (Dr Mahathir) had to abide by it, and might not be able to speak anymore.