

'Khairy does not influence my decision'

PUTRAJAYA: Just how influential is the Prime Minister's son-in-law?

Does he dictate government policy? Does he weigh in heavily on decisions made by Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi?

These clutch of questions — popular with the chattering class — were answered by the PM yesterday.

Abdullah said that many people tried to influence him because he was the prime minister, but dismissed talk that Khairy Jamaluddin had a particularly strong influence on the running of the administration.

Khairy, 30, began as a speech writer for Abdullah in 1999 and was later appointed special assistant when Abdullah was Deputy Prime Minister. He resigned as deputy private secretary to the Prime Minister-cum-director of the Policy and Communications Division in June 2004.

He is now an investment banker and deputy Umno Youth chief.

"During the time he worked for me, he was involved in analysing

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Abdullah

and giving views on things, but now he no longer does.

"He knows that people are making noise.

Now he has nothing to do with this, so why are all these allegations going around?" he asked after chairing a meeting with

Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers on the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

In recent months, former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had accused Abdullah of reversing his policies, and had been upset by the Government's decision to scrap several projects proposed by him. There have also been innuendoes suggesting that Khairy was having undue influence on government decisions.

On Wednesday, Abdullah broke his silence over Dr Mahathir's barbs, saying he was hurt by them.

He also said government policies cannot be tailored to suit one person's ideas, but should address the good of the nation.

Yesterday, he said he was under constant pressure from people trying to influence him, saying he could not avoid them.

"I listen to everybody's views. Sometimes, I listen to his (Khairy's) views on what Umno Youth feels about certain topics.

"It's normal. Everybody talks to me. Everybody wants to advice the prime minister what he should

do. There is no prime minister who is free from attempts to influence him, because people want to get contracts," Abdullah said.

"Everybody tries to influence me, the rakyat, the politicians, the Opposition, Everybody wants to be an adviser to the prime minister.

"We can't run away from it, but what is important is that the PM makes decisions that he thinks are prudent.

"And all decisions are my decisions," he said, adding that his decisions may have been hard for some people to accept.

"Who is ever satisfied 100 per cent? Never," he said.

"But the majority know the work we are doing is good,"

Asked whether he was hurt by such speculation on his son-in-law, he said: "I heard all sorts of things being said.

"I have feelings too. There were times I was sad by the things that were said. But I can take it."

However, the Prime Minister said he would not allow himself to be affected by such talk,