

Swipe at Premier's advisers

• KUALA LUMPUR

SARCASTIC references to an Oxbridge education also peppered Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's dialogue yesterday.

It was his way of referring to the highly educated young advisers of Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi. They include the latter's son-in-law, Oxford-educated Khairy Jamaluddin, whom the former premier blames for his troubles.

At least that was the conclusion drawn by the audience as Tun Dr Mahathir has made no secret of his dislike for Mr Khairy, although he has never spoken about him publicly.

Yesterday, he made numerous references to the Oxford-educated "experts".

"These experts, people say, are on Level 4, and they can telephone anyone with excellent advice. The PM is on Level 5; Level 4 is more powerful than Level 5, because they are cleverer.

"Level 5 did not go to Oxford, or Cambridge also," Tun Dr Mahathir said.

Level 5 refers to the Prime Minister's office located at that level in the PM's Department in Putrajaya, while Level 4 houses the special officers.

Mr Khairy used to head the policy planning team but has since left to become an investment banker.

When Datuk Seri Abdullah took office, several well-educated and polished young men were appointed as his special officers as well as to run the government-linked companies and state agencies.

Asked at the press conference later about the Prime Minister's young advisers, Tun Dr Mahathir described them as "very brilliant" people whose advice cannot be rejected.

"We can see this, we see their writing in the papers, extraordinary, I have never seen such writing," he said.

Some of the advisers occasionally write for the local newspapers, while Mr Khairy has a regular column in the *New Straits Times*.

When contacted, Mr Khairy declined comment.

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