

Umno has no plans to sack Dr M: Najib

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KUALA LUMPUR: Umno has no plans to sack former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad from the party for criticising the government.

"The only position the party has taken is to explain to the people some of the allegations made in a very correct manner," Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said yesterday.

"We don't only have to address Tun Dr Mahathir, but also the wider population ... and the people must be convinced that we have taken the right decisions," he said after opening the two-day World Security Forum themed "Managing Security: The Changing Mindset" at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre here.

He was asked to comment on Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz's statement that Mahathir should leave Umno for criticising the government and sharing a platform with opposition leaders.

On Nazri's outburst, he said: "Everybody is entitled to their own opinion."

Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin said he had appealed to Mahathir to stop interfering in the government of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as he could hurt himself that way.

Zainuddin said he told Mahathir: "The more statements you make, and the more you interfere in politics and administration of the country, the more you will hurt yourself and erode the name and reputation you have built over the years."

He met Mahathir at the Japan GT at Sepang F1 Circuit over the weekend.

Zainuddin said: "I spoke to him as a leader whom I have always respected, but I think that he has already made up his mind."

"Mahathir is a strong minded person by nature and he believes what he is doing is right. Whatever it is, I

believe in what Pak Lah (Abdullah) is doing and they are both my friends, but they both have their own ways and this is normal in politics."

He said there is a saying that in politics, "you will have no permanent friends or enemies, and that is a very practical statement in this matter".

In **Port Dickson**, Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin described as "slightly overboard" Mahathir's criticism of the government at a recent dialogue in Taman Melawati, Kuala Lumpur.

He likened the move to washing dirty linen in public and said it could cause anxiety and discontent among Umno members if allowed to continue.

"What will happen to the party and country if this action prolongs and becomes a surge and ripples that can develop into problems for the country?"

Dr Mahathir, please stop

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SO IT has come to this. Someone chose to fire a volley of criticisms and someone fired back. On Saturday another volley was fired and a broadside was the response. But to what avail? It is not doing the country or anyone any good.

People are confused and, if the present state of affairs continues, it may even divide the country. Most Malaysians know that this should not happen especially when we are on the threshold of the Ninth Malaysia Plan, a five-year programme which is intended to take us closer to our long-term objective of developed nation status.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who won the largest majority in the last general election shortly after he took over in 2003, is trying his best to keep the ship of state on an even keel while also ensuring that it moves for-

ward. It is unfortunate that his predecessor, the much respected Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who led the country for 22 years and put it on the map, and who should be an adviser and resource person, should instead choose to undermine him by publicly attacking him and his administration.

An erudite person that he is, Mahathir should know that no two people are the same and that it is unfair of anyone to demand that one be like the other. And, therefore, the difference in his emphasis and style to that of Abdullah is only to be expected. He had ruled Malaysia his way and Abdullah is trying to do it his way. Still it is to the credit of Abdullah that he is leaving almost unchanged much of what was handed down to him, especially Vision 2020.

Some departures from the old policies, dictated by time and

changed circumstances, are only to be expected. They would have been made anyway even had there not been a change in leadership. It is therefore unfortunate that Mahathir, after handpicking Abdullah as his successor, should suddenly come out in open criticism of him for the changes made.

Mahathir's threat to continue his present course of embarrassing the government would in the end only hurt him and all that he had achieved. His image would suffer as more and more people, including those who had supported him when he was the PM, come out to challenge and rebuke him like what Datuk Seri Nazri Abdul Aziz did yesterday. The Malays and UMNO members will be split again. This will not do the country any good, but Mahathir can prevent it by ending his attacks on his successor.