

Abdullah: Dr M has right to be delegate

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KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad has the right to be a Kubang Pasu Umno delegate at the coming general assembly if his division chooses him to be a delegate, said Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"If he's a delegate, he's a delegate-lah," the Umno president said last night after chairing the supreme council meeting.

As to whether Dr Mahathir would be allowed to address the general assembly, Abdullah said this was a matter for the Kedah Umno state liaison committee to decide in "accordance with established practice of so many years."

"He is eligible to be considered. We leave it to the state to decide," he said.

The former Prime Minister and ex-Umno president said recently that he wants to be a delegate at the general assembly in November and hoped to be given an opportunity to speak.

On whether it was better for Umno to allow Dr Mahathir the opportunity to speak at the party

assembly rather than outside, Abdullah said the general assembly was not held just to give someone the opportunity to speak.

"Whoever gets to speak is decided by the respective state liaison committees," he said.

To a question whether Abdullah would personally be comfortable with Dr Mahathir attending the assembly because the latter had been critical of him recently, the Prime Minister said: "Why should I have a problem? I have my duty to do whatever I am supposed to do."

When asked if he would have no problems shaking Dr Mahathir's hand and saying hello at the assembly, Abdullah said: "Something's wrong with your head. Whenever I meet him I never fail to shake hands with him. I've been saying this so many times and you want me to repeat (what I have said before)."

To another question, Abdullah said traditionally the party had been inviting people including former leaders to attend the assembly.

"But if he comes as a delegate, he comes as a delegate and he wants to come as a delegate," he said.