

'No crisis in Umno'

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KUALA LUMPUR: When Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's outburst against Government decisions was discussed at the Umno supreme council meeting yesterday, most of the members wanted to have their say.

But while they declared their full support for Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, they did not "go overboard" in their comments on Dr Mahathir nor did they condemn him as they still recognised and respected his contributions, said supreme council member Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad.

"We are very Malay in our approach. There is also no difficulty in accepting the changes in strategies and policies made by the present leader-

ship based on the current circumstances.

"The new leader is making his own plans for the country. We are not talking about Dr Mahathir's promises to the people anymore. We are talking about Pak Lah's promises," he said.

Shahrir said the supreme council declared that there were no factions in the party to avoid speculation that Dr Mahathir might have the intention to divide Umno or bring into question the position and support for Abdullah.

"Such speculation arose from Dr Mahathir's open criticism but there is no crisis of confidence for Pak Lah. To us, there is no crisis in the party," he said.

Rather, the supreme council

discussed how to react to Dr Mahathir's outburst and decided there was a need to explain the issues he had raised but not directly to him.

"It was decided that the answers would be made to the public and not in writing or face-to-face with Dr Mahathir because no matter how we respond, he will not be satisfied. He has answers for every answer.

"For example, for the Proton issues, the explanation was made to the public (though the press).

"As for the scrapping of the Johor half bridge project, the advisor (Tan Sri Ahmad Fuzi Abdul Razak) to the Foreign Ministry issued a statement but Dr Mahathir said he was ram-

bling.

"So, the explanations will be for the public's benefit and we will leave it at that," Shahrir said.

Speaking to reporters later, Shahrir said that Umno was "not responsible for one man's happiness or unhappiness."

"The issues will be explained not for his own consumption or happiness but to make the public understand the issues," he said.

Shahrir added that support for Umno would not waver if the members appreciated the fact that the best answer to any criticism was through their performance.

Wanita chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, who is International Trade and Industry Minister, said that the issue of

approved permits for the import of cars raised by Dr Mahathir had been answered in Parliament and so the explanation would be given to the public.

"If he wants a formal reply, we can write to him but it will be the same thing. There is nothing else to add," she said.

Puteri Umno chief Datuk Noraini Ahmad said: "We respect and appreciate Dr Mahathir. Pak Lah is our leader now. Pak Lah has his ways just as Tun had his ways before," she said.

Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said that Dr Mahathir once told him that "people living in glass houses should not throw stones."

"Now he is not only throwing stones, but also big