

No action to be taken against Dr M for now

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KUALA LUMPUR: The Umno supreme council has decided that former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad would not be stripped of his advisory posts in several government-linked companies.

This is despite numerous calls from within the party to remove him as adviser to several companies, notably Petronas, Proton and the Langkawi Development Authority.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the council had taken note of members' proposals, especially the Umno leadership in Kedah which had suggested that Dr Mahathir relinquish his advisory posts since he had been critical of the government.

"However, we have decided that Tun (Dr Mahathir) will not be removed from the advisory roles he holds in several government bodies."

Asked if the former party president had immunity against disciplinary action, Abdullah said: "Nobody is immune. It is up to us to decide if action would be taken or not. For the time being, we will not take action against him."

He added that Umno was not afraid to take action against Dr Mahathir.

"It is not a question of being afraid, but we don't think we want to take action against him now. Let him say whatever he wants," Abdullah said at a Press confer-

ence after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the Umno headquarters yesterday.

Abdullah said the government would continue to reply to Dr Mahathir's criticisms and provide answers to all his questions.

He said it would be done in an open manner so that "the rakyat would also be able to understand" certain government policies and

decisions".

As for people's reaction to the on-going political spat between the two, Abdullah said he believed they had accepted his explanations.

Asked if he was prepared to meet Dr Mahathir for the second time, Abdullah replied that it was a "speculative question" and declined to answer.

On complaints that there was a lack of projects for Class F contractors in the country, Abdullah said the claims were unfounded.

He said the value of development projects from 2005 to October 2006 was RM2.96 billion for 144,060 projects.

"These projects had been given to 43,806 Class F contractors," he said.