

Umno leaders continue to chide Dr M over spat

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PETALING JAYA: Umno leaders continued to chide former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday saying his criticism of the current leadership would only weaken the party and denigrate it in the eyes of the other communities.

During the various Hari Raya open houses, while some stressed the criticism had not affected Malaysia's standing overseas, others urged for the focus to shift to implementing the 9th Malaysia Plan.

In **Sungai Petani**, Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin took Dr Mahathir to task for openly discrediting Abdullah, saying the other communities were monitoring his comments.

"If this goes on, the mudslinging will worsen with more revelations which would be detrimental to the community and issues of cronyism coming out in the open.

"When Tunku (Abdul Rahman) criticised Tun, he only touched on policies; never on personal issues like cronyism or *sanak saudara* (relatives)."

In **Parit**, Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Tajul Rosli Ghazali used football analogy when he said advice would be more effective if given in the changing room or during half-time instead of a coach shout-

ing instructions at players during a game.

He said Umno members could accept criticism from the Opposition but not from a party member.

In **Alor Star**, Kedah Umno Youth urged the party disciplinary committee to take action against Dr Mahathir.

Chief Mohd Rawi Abdul Hamid said in a press conference that Dr Mahathir's criticism had tarnished the party's image and created more problems.

The wing also agreed with Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid that Dr Mahathir's continuing criticism would make the people, in Umno especially, lose respect for him as a statesman.

In **Sibu**, Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Joseph Salang said that leaders of countries whom he had met so far were not worried over the exchange between the two leaders as they considered the spat a personal matter.

He added, however, that it would be good if the row could be resolved quickly.

"It is among Malaysians that the criticism is evoking all kinds of thoughts and reactions.

"They need to stop as we all need to focus our unity, energy and resources to successfully implement the 9th Malaysia

Plan and achieve the Vision 2020 goals," he said.

In **Bachok**, Deputy Finance Minister Datuk Dr Awang Adek Hussin said Malaysia was able to gain RM1bil due to a more efficient currency management under the present leadership.

Dr Awang Adek said a moderate growth of 5% to 6% a year was better for now as it could be sustained and eventually create better long-term prospects.

In **Kota Baru**, state Umno chief Datuk Seri Annuar Musa said Umno did not expect the dispute to affect its chances of recapturing Kelantan.

"The number who showed up to welcome the Prime Minister is more than those who showed up when Dr Mahathir visited here weeks earlier.

"My opinion is that Dr Mahathir is not hitting out at Umno. He is just criticising the leadership style of Abdullah.

"If some of the points are correct, we should take steps to rectify them. It (the rift) should not have an effect on the party," he said.

"I feel Dr Mahathir is still needed and relevant to Umno as he has a lot of experience. We should look at his criticism in the best spirit."

However, he stressed Dr Mahathir must not distract Abdullah from doing his work.