

'Spraying' culprit to face tough action

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BANGI: Any Umno member found to be responsible for the "spraying" incident on Friday affecting Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad may be expelled and stripped of all positions.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said action would be taken based on the party's disciplinary rules if the culprit was an Umno member.

"He will be stripped of any position that he holds. We also need to consider the possibility of the person being expelled from the party," he told reporters after launching the Kelab Penyayang summit conference here yesterday.

The incident occurred shortly after the former prime minister had arrived at the Sultan Ismail Petra Airport in Pengkalan Chepa for a day visit.

On Padang Besar Umno division's invitation to Dr Mahathir to open the division's delegates meeting next month, Abdullah

said all divisions must abide by the Umno supreme council's decision.

The council decided last week that only council members, mentris besar and Umno ministers could open the meetings so that they could explain current issues and projects to be implemented under the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

"The decision was made earlier than the Kota Baru (spray) incident. What is so difficult? It is a party ruling. They should follow," Abdullah said.

He added that Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Radzi Sheikh Ahmad had explained that no one would be exempted from the decision.

In Kangar, Padang Besar Umno chief Datuk Zahidi Zainul Abidin said the division would meet on Tuesday to officially withdraw the invitation.

Dr Mahathir said the police had informed him that they would meet him soon to record

a statement over the incident.

"I am ready to give my statement," he said at the Royal Yacht Club in Langkawi after visiting his Loaf bakery at Telaga Harbour Park and the newly refurbished Jetty Point yesterday.

Deputy Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin said the movement could not accept what had happened to Dr Mahathir despite learning about "certain reasons" that had led to the incident.

"He is a great leader and should be respected. And it is not only because he is a leader. Even ordinary people must not be attacked in that manner," he said in Lumut.

Former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said in Johor Baru that while he might not agree with Dr Mahathir's ways, such an incident should not happen as the country had laws that must be followed.

In Kota Baru, Kelantan Umno chairman Datuk Seri Annuar Musa urged the police to work round the clock to bring to justice those behind the incident.

State Umno information chief Datuk Md Alwi Che Ahmad described the act as a cowardly one that had indirectly tarnished the image of the Kelantanese, who were known to be peaceful.

He said despite being critical of the present Government, Dr Mahathir should be respected for his contributions to nation-building.

Mentri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat said the act had done injustice to Islam, as it had occurred during a period where Muslims should abstain from sin and on holy Friday.

"Who would want to attack an 81-year-old man who has a record of serving the country with distinction?" he said.