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Former PM gets flak over advice

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KUALA LUMPUR: Umno leaders have come out to strongly criticise Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for telling Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to keep quiet after handing over power to his successor.

De facto Law Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz said Dr Mahathir should have followed his own advice.

"He is the right person to say this because that is exactly what he did."

He said Dr Mahathir did not keep quiet or allow Abdullah to run the country freely after handing over the premiership to him.

"He should have followed his own advice instead of creating all the trouble for us."

Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said agreed with Nazri that Dr Mahathir should have followed his own words.

Azalina said Dr Mahathir's statement was like adding salt to an open wound.

"Tun should not feel that he is always right by giving advice. It is going to weaken the party further," she said, adding that he should instead set a good example to the younger leaders.

Information Minister Datuk Ahmad Shabery Cheek questioned what Dr Mahathir meant by asking Abdullah to keep quiet.

He said Dr Mahathir should set an example for Umno leaders.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Khaled Nordin said Dr Mahathir's statement was unbecoming.

He said there was no need for anyone to say anything as both Abdullah and his successor Datuk Seri Najib Razak knew how to conduct themselves after the handover.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar noted that he did not see much risk of interference from Abdullah once he stepped down.

"The fact is all former prime ministers have got the tendency to comment, so this is a normal thing. What is most important is to make sure there is no interference.

"Maybe Dr Mahathir is reminding Pak Lah based on his own personal experience," he said, perhaps alluding to the vocal criticisms by the former prime minister against Abdullah.

"His (Abdullah's) decision was made not in a personal interest but in the interest of the nation and party, so I do not think he would interfere (in the government)," Syed Hamid added.