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I'm glad I was wrong, says Mahathir

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PUTRAJAYA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's decision to not contest in the Umno elections in March will be good for Umno as it can rebuild itself.

Former premier Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he was glad he had been wrong when he wrote in his blog www.chedet.com that Abdullah would not step down.

"Of course, I am very happy for Umno, not for myself, because Umno can rebuild itself.

"But Umno will not be able to restore the full confidence of the people as many of its supporters, who voted for the Opposition, may want to continue working for them," he said in response to Abdullah's announcement here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, however, said he felt it was better for Abdullah to step down now rather than wait until March as he could still be an obstruction because he was not giving Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak full authority to rehabilitate the party.

"Until March Pak Lah must keep quiet and let Najib run the show. He should not interfere because if Najib appears to be following him or taking his advice, I think the latter will lose support," he said.

Asked if he would rejoin the party now that Abdullah would not be Prime Minister after March, Dr Mahathir said he would have to study the situation.

"Yes, I said I am going to rejoin Umno but he is still (Umno) president until March. But if I can do some good by rejoining, I will," he said, adding that if he was to go back to Umno, those who had left the party with him should be readmitted to ensure Umno wins votes at the next general election.

On whether he would be roped in to act as mentor to Umno, Dr Mahathir said he was prepared to be consulted to solve problems, adding that he would give advice even if he was not asked.