
No one exempted from the OSA, says Mahathir

By LEE KAR YEAN

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government will not exempt anyone, including journalists, from the Official Secrets Act (OSA), Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

"If someone deliberately buys or sells information contravening the OSA, we will have to take action against him regardless of whether he is a journalist or not.

"We cannot say journal-

ists belonged to a privileged class. The law applies to all equally," the Prime Minister said.

He said if journalists were exempted from the OSA, then certain quarters would use them to obtain government secrets.

"We are being very proper in this; are you asking for privileges?"

"If the Dewan Rakyat stipulates that journalists are exempted from the law, then I will follow the law. But as it is now, the

law says nobody is exempted," he told reporters after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting at the party headquarters here.

He was commenting on the leakage of information from the Auditor-General's office to the press regarding the purchase of Volvo cars by the Kuala Lumpur City Hall.

He confirmed receiving Tan Sri Elyas Omar's resignation letter and said the Datuk Bandar's deci-

sion was an act of a gentleman which should be an example to all.

He said this was the first time in the country's history that someone had asked to be relieved of his post to protect the Government's image.

"This is something new because normally when someone who is accused of wrongdoing, he would try his best to justify himself and would adamantly hold on to his position.

"I consider this gentle-

manly; it will be good if all of us could become as gentlemanly. Our country will be progressive," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet would meet today and discuss the resignation of Elyas.

Earlier, the Prime Minister brushed aside an opposition allegation that the press had been gagged from reporting anything bad about the Government.

"We had issued permits

to many bodies to print newspapers, including to those who are against the Government," he said.

"These newspapers had never written anything good about the Government but we had never stopped them from making biased and inaccurate reports," he added.

At the press conference, Dr Mahathir also announced that Umno would donate \$100,000 to the Bosnian welfare fund (see Page 2).