

▼16/09/20-54MST

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Mahathir-Ghafar (with pix)

DR MAHATHIR CONFIRMS THAT GHAFAR IS ON LEAVE

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 16 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today confirmed that Deputy Prime Minister Ghafar Baba has taken leave but "not a long" one.

"He has been given some leave but he will be in the country," he told reporters after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Diversified Resources Berhad (DRB) and Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional Berhad (Proton), here.

However, he declined to disclose how long Ghafar would be on leave, saying only that Ghafar was taking only what he was entitled to and that it was not a long leave.

Dr Mahathir was asked to confirm a news report today that Ghafar had gone on leave beginning yesterday.

Asked to comment on a statement by Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz on Tuesday that Ghafar should not be pressured to withdraw from the race for party's deputy presidency, the prime minister said everyone should be free to make his own decision. -- more

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▼16/09/20-41MST

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Mahathir-Ghafar 2 (last) Kuala Lumpur

"I think there should not be any pressure on anybody," he added.

Rafidah was reported as saying that Umno members should let Ghafar decide for himself without any coercion or pressure from any quarter and that he would be able to come to proper decision if left alone.

On allegations that Ghafar had been misquoted by the press and also on his own experience of being misquoted, he quipped: "Maybe we should close down all newspapers because they distort.... especially Far Eastern Economic Review which has nothing good to say about Malaysia."

Earlier, when asked by a foreign journalist when Malaysia would deploy its troops to Bosnia, Dr Mahathir said the 1,700 men and officers would be there sometime in November.

He said the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) member countries were slow in responding to the situation in Bosnia as the OIC expected the Western powers and Nato to act quickly based on their response against Iraq during the Gulf War.

"But this time (we) were disappointed," he said, adding that even though it was a bit late, Malaysia, along with a few other OIC member countries, would be sending troops to Bosnia under the United Nations peacekeeping mission. -- Bernama

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▼16/09/20-43MST