

# Dr M: There should not be any pressure

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. — Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said no one should be pressured into making a decision regarding their political future.

The Prime Minister, asked to comment on the statement by Umno Wanita leader, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, who had said that Umno members should give deputy president Abdul Ghafar Baba time to evaluate his position and make a decision on his political future, said:

"I think so ... everybody should be free to make his own decision."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a Press conference after witnessing the signing of a memorandum of understanding between Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional and Diversified Resources Berhad for the develop-

ment, manufacture and distribution of the two-door hatchback version of *Proton Wira*.

Asked whether the Deputy Prime Minister was on leave, Dr Mahathir said: "Ghafar is on leave. He is entitled to leave and he has been given some ... but not long. He will be in the country."

Dr Mahathir, however, declined to comment when asked to respond to a statement by Ghafar that he would only withdraw if the Prime Minister did likewise.

On complaints by Ghafar that his statements had been distorted by newspapers, Dr Mahathir said: "My comment is that we should close down all newspapers. They distort ... especially *Far Eastern Economic Review*. They have nothing good to say about Malaysia."

Asked about the meeting he had with Sabah Affairs Minister Tun Datu Mustapha Datu Harun, Dr Mahathir said that it was a normal meeting.

"I discussed with him his appointment as Minister and his needs," he said.

Asked to respond on the purchase of stakes in the *South China Morning Post* by Robert Kuok, Dr Mahathir said: "He may be a Malaysian citizen but he did not act for the Malaysian Government. He is quite free to buy anything."

"I still worry about Rupert Murdoch controlling so many newspapers and TV stations all over the world. One person should not control too many."

On why the Organisation of Islamic Conference was late in responding to the Bosnian conflict, Dr Mahathir said this was because

the OIC was told that Nato was about to take action.

He added that this made the OIC wait because in the past the Western powers reacted swiftly, as was seen in the case of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The Western powers acted almost immediately then, he said.

"We are very unhappy with the situation in Bosnia. We think that such a massacre should not take place in full view of the world on CNN and Star TV."

"We believed that they would act promptly but this time we are disappointed. Although we are late ... it's better late than never."

Malaysia will send 1,700 of its troops to serve with the United Nations peace-keeping forces in Bosnia. The soldiers are expected to be in Bosnia in November, he said.