

# Decision after Cabinet discussion, says Dr M

11 DEC 1993

By PAUL GABRIEL

LANGKAWI: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has received some verification of Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating's expression of regret.

But the Prime Minister said yesterday he preferred to discuss with his Cabinet ministers today before reaching any decision.

"What I do will depend on what my colleagues tell me. Don't try to anticipate before then because I can't anticipate (it) myself," he told an Australian journalist at a press conference at the Mahsuri International Convention Centre.

Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had said that the Cabinet meeting today would decide on the status of relations with Australia.

Dr Mahathir had said on Wednesday that he was prepared to accept Keating's statement of regret if there was verification.

A spokesman for Keating was reported to have said that Keating was encouraged by Dr Mahathir's remarks.

Extracts of the Australian premier's speech ex-

pressing regret would be delivered to Dr Mahathir's staff, the spokesman reportedly said.

Australian Defence Minister Senator Robert Ray, who was here for the Lima '93 exhibition on Wednesday, had also met his Malaysian counterpart Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak on the matter.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said he felt the problem with Australia was "cultural."

He called on Australians to be more sensitive.

"How can you say we murdered Vietnamese (refugees) when we actually helped them? We never said anything about Australians misbehaving.

"We think it is in the best interest of everyone to speak the truth if you can't speak the truth, you tone down," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who yesterday visited the Australian delegation's pavilion for the first time since the exhibition opened four days ago, said Malaysia had no problem with Australian businessmen, "only (with) your government."

"People invest here because we are nice people. We are your friends," he added.

Asie  
erday