

Rally not for Umno

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Party has nothing to do with
MAF gathering, says Mahathir

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PUTRAJAYA, Sat: The Malay Action Front (MAF) is not bowing to appeals and will hold its gathering at the Putra World Trade Centre tomorrow - but Umno members are prohibited from taking part in it.

However, several Umno leaders have already committed themselves to attending the gathering, which leaders of Barisan Nasional component parties have said should be called off to ease tensions.

Asked about the MAF gathering, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Umno has nothing to do with it, although "a few" of its members are involved.

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"We have prohibited Umno members from taking part, but since there are those who want to take part, we can't do anything about it," he told reporters here.

Asked whether the gathering should continue, Mahathir said: "Let them do it, since (they say) other people can even hold street demonstrations."

On objections to the gathering from other parties like PAS and DAP, Mahathir said this was their stand and he does not know anything about it.

The prime minister also said police rejected permis-

Permit refused due to reasons of security

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sion for the MAF to hold the gathering in Kampung Baru because of rumours that certain groups intended to create disturbances during the event.

Police refused a permit for the Kampung Baru venue because of security reasons, and have warned of stern action against those who gather at the Sultan Sulaiman Club.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the Home Ministry and the police have been fair in refusing to grant the MAF organisers a permit to hold their assembly in an open space.

He said the organisers were not granted a permit to hold their rally at the Sultan Sulaiman Club because "anything can happen".

"We cannot allow it as we

want to apply our rules on the matter fairly to all parties," he said in Lumut after launching the National Registration Department's family day.

Meanwhile, Mahathir said he has heard rumours that certain quarters were planning to gate-crash the gathering and create mischief by bringing their own banners and stuff.

"I heard there will be a demonstration, but by someone else. They want to have a demonstration to disturb the gathering. I don't know whether it is true or otherwise."

He explained that police did not allow the gathering to be held at the Sultan Sulaiman Club, as anybody can come and create a disturbance at an open venue like that.

"There are those who will come in and create mischief by bringing in banners and other things if the gathering

is held in the open.

"They are in favour of demonstrations, but if held by someone else and they don't agree with the subject matter, they will then disturb the gathering," he said.

Earlier, Mahathir attended the first wedding reception held at Putrajaya Precinct Eight multipurpose hall between Valluvan Veloo, 31, and Thilagarani Selvaraj, 26.

Valluvan, an assistant director with the Malaysian Administration Manpower Planning Unit policy and corporate division, said both his wife and he were overwhelmed with the prime minister's attendance at the reception.

"I feel very happy that the PM came, even though he is a very busy man," said the groom, adding that the invitation was issued personally to Mahathir.

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