

# Dr M's family relieved situation is clarified

By JUNE H.L. WONG

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's family thanked Umno for understanding and supporting his decision to resign all his party and government posts in October next year.

Sneaking on behalf of the family, the Prime Minister's eldest daughter, Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, when contacted yesterday after the Umno supreme council announcement, said it was a relief for them that the "situation of the past few days" had been clarified.

She added that the chaos and uncertainty that ensued following her father's unexpected decision had put enormous pressure on the family.

"My brothers and I had been bombarded with questions we couldn't answer and we are glad that the situation has now been cleared up," she said, adding that the family fully supported their father's and Umno's decision on the matter.

Marina said she was also relieved that the party had accepted her father's reason for resigning

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"After 21 years as Prime Minister, he felt he had been in power long enough and it was time to go and that this was the right time," she added.

Dr Mahathir had shocked the nation when he told the Umno general assembly on Saturday that he was resigning; an hour later, deputy party president and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi announced that he had agreed to stay on.

Marina explained that what caused her father's apparent change of mind was the overwhelming reaction from stunned party leaders and members who broke down in tears and stopped him from finishing what he had wanted to say.

"He honestly thought he could tender his resignation and leave. He didn't expect such a strong reaction. He was shocked when he later saw on TV how emotional people got," said Marina.

Asked whether Dr Mahathir told the family of his decision, Marina said none of them, not even her mother, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, knew beforehand

Neither did he give any indication of what he was planning to do during a short holiday in Italy after his historic meeting with the Pope in the Vatican earlier this month.

Marina, who was with her parents, said her father was completely relaxed and happy during that short break even though he was busy writing his speech for the assembly.

Asked about Dr Mahathir's health, she said he was "perfectly healthy" and that "it is not a factor at all" in his decision to retire.

She also said that although the family was as stunned as the rest of the nation by her father's announcement, they had all rallied round him, supporting and respecting his decision.

Asked about the agreed timeframe for Dr Mahathir to step down, which would be after the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) meeting in October next year, Marina said she believed that her father felt that the OIC as well as the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in February next year were important and that "he should be there."