

Nazri has no right to make demand, says Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz has no right to demand that a member leaves Umno because the party does not belong to him, says Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Describing Nazri as a "hatchet man among henchmen," the former prime minister and ex-Umno president told a press conference yesterday: "I don't care at all for his opinion.

"Umno does not belong to Datuk

Nazri. The party belongs to all Malays. Nazri has no right on his own to demand that this person or that person leaves the party. I was in Umno before he was even born."

On Monday, Nazri, who is a minister in the Prime Minister's Department, declared "open war" on Dr Mahathir, demanding that he quit the party because he had colluded with the Opposition and was constantly

attacking the Government.

Dr Mahathir stressed that he had never worked with the Opposition, he would not leave Umno and, as far as he was concerned, "criticising the Government is not war."

He clarified that PAS representatives were present at the forum where he spoke, but he did not at any time share a platform with the Opposition.

He took note of the fact that newspapers had shown a picture of him smiling at members of the opposition party, adding that "I smiled at a lot of people but those pictures were not shown."

Dr Mahathir said he had nothing to gain from the criticisms he made against the Government, and he had no ambition to return to politics, not even as a Member of Parliament.

The former premier said he was merely "sticking his neck out" because many people had approached him "to do something about the situation in the country," as they had been "feeling the pinch."

"I also see wrong things being done and it is my duty (to speak up). Lots of people are not angry with me. In fact they come and see me and tell me, 'Go on, Tun. We can't do it,'" he added.