

No decision on lifting ban, says Mahathir

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MUAR: The Government has not made any decision to lift its ban on contract awards to British firms, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Asked to confirm reports quoting British Trade Minister Richard Needham that there was a possibility Malaysia was likely to lift the ban within the next six weeks, the Prime Minister said:

"I do not know about this. Maybe he has received information that I have not received yet."

To another question that the British Trade Minister had said Britain was facing pressure to retaliate against Malaysia if the Government did not lift the ban, Dr Mahathir said it was a British problem.

"They get pressure. We also receive pressure. Any Government or ruling political party would

surely face pressure in dealing with issues," he told newsmen after a day's visit to Muar.

In London, a spokesman for the Trade Ministry said what was reported were not Needham's words.

"They were put in the questions in the interview. And the minister was quoted out of context," she said.

She also said the Government was not under pressure to retaliate.

Needham was reported to be still overseas.

In Tanah Merah, Kelantan Umno Youth leader Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik took Needham to task for his "irresponsible" statement.

"We disagree with his giving a timeframe (on the lifting of the ban) because it's up to the discretion of the government," Bernama quoted him as telling reporters.