

# Ministry for Sabah Affairs may be replaced

PENANG, Tues. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he might consider setting up a new Ministry to replace the Ministry for Sabah Affairs.

He was asked whether there was still a need for such a Ministry since Sabah is already under the Barisan Nasional Government.

He said the new Ministry could be given the task of looking after certain agencies.

"I still have an empty chair in my Cabinet and I am looking into the possibility of putting a few agencies under a new Ministry so that we have adequate control over them."

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after opening the Penang Skills Development Centre in Bayan Baru.

Asked whether Malaysia's unwillingness to establish diplomatic ties with Israel would cause Malaysia to lose out in business opportunities with that country, he said Malaysia could trade with other countries.

Asked to comment on Press reports concerning negotiations between Jordan and Israel to establish ties, he said he believed Israel was trying to reduce the support for Palestine Liberation Organisation chairman Yasser Arafat.

If other countries did not support Arafat, Israel's attempts to undermine Arafat would be successful, he said.

"I hope other countries will continue to support Arafat."

Asked about when the Government wanted Prince Norodom Chakrapong to leave Malaysia, Dr Mahathir said it wanted the Cambodian prince to leave as soon as possible.

On the forum of Vision 2020 between Malaysia and Britain proposed by British Trade Minister Richard Needham, Dr Mahathir said any efforts to improve relations were welcomed.

On whether Penang BN was ready to face the general election, he said the BN was always ready.

He said the BN was confident of retaining Penang, adding that to fight a battle, one has to be confident... otherwise don't fight".

Tonight, Dr Mahathir attended a dinner hosted by the Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Dr Hamdan Sheikh Tahir at Equatorial Hotel.