

Mahathir
Mohamad

PM: No plans to increase size of Cabinet

By Sabry Sharif

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PETALING JAYA, Wed. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he did not have plans to enlarge the Cabinet or create new portfolios as he did not believe in leading a top-heavy administration despite the stunning victory by the Barisan Nasional in the just concluded ninth general election yesterday.

The Prime Minister said although the ruling coalition now had more Members of Parliament and State assemblymen elected for the 192 Parliament and 394 State seats, it did not warrant increasing the size of the Cabinet.

Prior to the dissolution of Parliament on April 6, Dr Mahathir had a 26-member Cabinet including Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Apart from the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, who were also the Home and Finance Ministers respectively, the rest were appointed to 22 Ministries.

Said Dr Mahathir: "All (Barisan Nasional) parties contesting in the general election have increased their seats. The MCA has increased its seats, the Gerakan has also increased (theirs)."

"So everybody is even. As far as the proportion (of political parties' representation) in the Cabinet is concerned, there is no change, unless we want to enlarge the Cabinet.

"But I don't think I want to enlarge the Cabinet," Dr Mahathir said when asked by the Press at the Malaysia Airlines engineering complex in Subang on the possibility of a bigger Cabinet given the landslide victory in the polls yesterday.

He had earlier taken a 45-minute flight on a United Airlines Boeing 777 which was here as part of a three-week "world celebration tour" to introduce the latest member of the Boeing family of aircraft.

MAS executive chairman Datuk Tajudin Ramli was among the top MAS and aviation officials accompanying the Prime Minister.

Earlier, before boarding the aircraft, Dr Mahathir had a pleasant surprise when he was presented a cake by Tajudin on behalf of all who were present, including representatives from Pemas Sime Darby (Boeing's local marketing agent here), the Department of Civil Aviation and Malaysia Airports Berhad, to commemorate the Barisan Nasional's return to power with 161 parliamentary and 338 State seats.

Dr Mahathir also ruled out the possibility of creating new portfolios in the Cabinet.

"We do not create Ministries just because we have a lot more people in the Parliament and State constituencies, unless we have work for them," he quipped.

To a question, he said, he needed more time to decide on who should be appointed to the Cabinet.

"It's almost the end of the week. I don't think I can do

PLEASE TURN TO
PAGE 3 COL 1

PM says he needs more time to name Cabinet

□ FROM PAGE ONE

it in three days. I think I will take a bit more time," he said.

However, he hinted there would be new faces and some reshuffling of posts previously held by Ministers in the former Cabinet.

"As you well know, some Ministers are out of the Cabinet. They have gone to contest in the States.

"I have to think of filling up the vacancies. Maybe shift around some a bit."

Six Ministers and seven Deputy Minister posts are vacant after the just concluded general election.

Of this number, four Ministers contested State seats, one did not contest and another was defeated during the April 24 and 25 polls.

Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid won the Kuala Lumpur State seat, National Unity and Social Development Minister Datuk Napsiah Omar was elected Pahang State Assemblywoman, Public Enterprises Minister Datuk Dr Yusof Nor is the new Kempong Raya Assemblyman, while Youth and Sports Minister Ghani Othman won the Seremban State seat.

Health Minister Datuk Lee Kim Sai retired from politics and Minister at the Prime Minister's Department and Parti Berjaya Demokratik Sabah (PBDS) president Datuk Bernard Dompok was defeated in Penampang, Sabah.

The Deputy Ministers who did not stand in the general election were Datuk Mohd Farid Ariffin (Health), Datuk Dr T. Marimuthu (Agriculture), Datuk Wan Abu Bakar Wan Mohamed (Defence), Datuk Alex Lee (National Unity and Social Development) and Datuk Daud Taha (Housing and Local Government).

Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government Datuk Dr Jeffery Kitingan lost in Bandau parliamentary constituency. Deputy Minister of Rural Development Mohd Yassin Kamari died in office.

To a question, Dr Mahathir said he would have to look into the representation of the Kadazandusun interests in the Cabinet following Dompok's defeat in Penampang.

He also said he did not want to be tied down by a quota system of the various State Barisan Nasional parties when appointing Ministers in the Cabinet.

"Their appointments will depend on, among others, their capabilities, and looking after the interests of the races."

On the future of former Johor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin who won the Pagoh parliamentary seat, Dr Mahathir said there was a possibility that he would be appointed a Cabinet Minister.

Muhyiddin is widely tipped to be replaced by Ghani as the new Johor Menteri Besar.

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