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PM: No Cabinet reshuffle, no change in BNM

David Ong-Yeoh

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has again dismissed talk about a Cabinet reshuffle.

"I have no idea at all about the shuffling of the Cabinet," said Dr Mahathir yesterday, when asked to comment on talks in the stock market about a Cabinet reshuffle and a change in the management of Bank Negara Malaysia (BNM).

He was also asked to comment on the recent weak performance of the stock performance, which he referred to his deputy and Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who was at the press conference.

"As far as the stock market is here, my colleague here can answer you ... he is the man in charge," Dr Mahathir told reporters after a briefing on the National Information Technology Agenda in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Anwar, however, declined to comment.

Commenting on the latest US decision to impose economic sanctions on Myanmar, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia will take a very strong stand on the matter.

"I don't know about other members of Asean but I certainly will take a very strong stand on this," he said.

On Wednesday, Dr Mahathir had said Malaysia, as current Asean chairman, would discuss the matter with other Asean members, when asked if Malaysia would protest against the US decision move.

"I don't like people who tell me who I should have as my friends and who should be my enemies.

"I develop my own enemies.

"We are an independent country and we want to behave like an independent country.

"It is bad enough that we are not allowed to form the East Asia Economic Caucus (EAEC).

"Of course, we can go ahead but other members are being stopped from joining the EAEC.

"I thought that this is going to be a free world. What free world?"

Asked on Malaysia's stance on the US sanctions in relation to Malaysia's support for sanctions against South Africa during the period of Apartheid rule, Dr Mahathir said it was a different situation.

The sanctions against South Africa, he said, were at the request of the African National Congress (ANC), where the people in Myanmar did not ask for sanctions.

"The people of Myanmar did not invite sanctions, except maybe for Aung San Suu Kyi, who has her own political agenda.

"But sanctions will affect the people of Myanmar, not the Government."

He said when Malaysia broke off relations with South Africa in 1964, it lost a lot of money, but was willing to do so because "we have some principles".

Asked if Myanmar's entry into Asean means the group's support for Suu Kyi, Dr Mahathir said the support is not for the Government or the individuals, but for the inclusion of Myanmar into Asean.

"If they want to change their Government, they will still be in Asean," he said, adding it is up to them if they want to change the Government.

"We don't ask if they are democratic or not because in Asean today there are governments that can be considered democratic and governments which are said to be undemocratic.

"And as you know, Malaysia is accused of having an undemocratic government, so do we expel ourselves from Asean because of that?"
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