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Ministers, MBS `can stay in hotels if homes are being renovated'

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Ministers and Menteri Besar are eligible to stay in hotels if their houses are under repair or renovation, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Asked to comment on reports that Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar had stayed at Hotel Radisson in Shah Alam for 125 days, incurring a total cost of RM40,000 when his house was under renovation, Dr Mahathir said:

"When I was made the Education Minister, I did not have a house and had to stay at a hotel. I stayed at Mirama Hotel."

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters after he and his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali called on Ugandan President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni and wife Janet at the Renaissance Hotel.

On a Berita Harian report today that the Anti-Corruption Agency was investigating allegations that Abu Hassan's driver had also stayed at the same hotel although only division one civil servants are eligible to stay in such hotels, Dr Mahathir said:

"That, I don't know. I dare not comment."

Dr Mahathir was also asked to comment on the statement by Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad yesterday that Menteri Besar and Chief Ministers will meet in one or two months to discuss co-operation to overcome the water supply problem.

Mokhtar's statement was met with strong criticism from the public who felt that the State Governments had no sense of urgency in solving the problem.

"The meeting is only to determine policy matters. As far as co-operation between the States on water supply is concerned, there is no problem," Dr Mahathir said.

Dr Mahathir said each State had the right to sell its water to other States because water was a State resource.

"It is their resource, like tin and petroleum. Of course they will want to sell them," he said.

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