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PM: Cabinet reshuffle not part of 'shocking measures'

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad dismissed today speculation that there would be a Cabinet reshuffle in the near future, saying that it was not among the "shocking measures" he mentioned two weeks ago.

He said the measures announced today by Bank Negara to revive the country's economy were shocking enough.

"Well, to me this (announcement) is shocking enough. It may not be shocking enough for you, but it is shocking enough for me.

"A lot of people say you should not do this, but we have been thinking about this for quite some time already."

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a Press conference at Angkasapuri after giving a special interview to a three-man panel which was carried live over radio and television.

When asked whether the "shocking measures" which he mentioned in a meet-the-people session in Kota Kinabalu last month included a Cabinet reshuffle as widely speculated, he said: "There is no truth to the speculation until it becomes the truth."

Dr Mahathir was also asked on the status of Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is also Finance Minister.

"What do you mean by status? His health or what? Well, he is still standing up, I think," the Prime Minister said.

Asked again whether there was any truth to rumours that Anwar was resigning, he said:

"That you have to ask him ... whether he wants to resign. How would I know what he is thinking of?"

Asked whether he would accept Anwar's resignation if he offered to do so, Dr Mahathir said:

"Well, if he gives a very good reason, I will have to accept it. If he gives health reasons, like he cannot breathe any more, how do I say 'no you have to continue breathing'? It all depends on the reason."

Asked if Anwar, in his capacity as Finance Minister, supported the measures announced by Bank Negara today, Dr Mahathir said: "Yes, yes. He has been in it all the time."

He said Anwar was in fact a member of the executive committee of the National Economic Action Council, which had made decisions on the efforts to revive the economy.

Asked to describe his relationship with Anwar now, Dr Mahathir said it was "good".

Yesterday, when speaking to reporters in Bukit Mertajam after chairing a closed-door meeting with Permatang Pauh Umno division members, Anwar said he was not resigning from any government or political post.

He also said it was not true that he had tendered his resignation.

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