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Dr M has no plans to be senior minister

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says he has no plans to become a "senior minister" upon his retirement.

"When I retire, I will retire and... I will spend my time praying because my days are over. I have to prepare for the next world," he said on his first working day at the new administrative capital, Putrajaya, yesterday.

"We do not have senior ministers here... but I am allowed to come to this office... to see, not to stay or work here," he said when asked by a foreign journalist whether he would be a senior minister upon retirement.

"The decision to build a house for the deputy prime minister is because I do hope future governments will have prime ministers and deputy prime ministers... not just prime ministers lording it over the rest," Dr Mahathir said.

Initial plans for Putrajaya did not include a residence for the deputy prime minister.

On Saturday when speaking at a press conference during the Umno General Assembly, Dr Mahathir had said his former deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, did not want to build a house for a deputy prime minister at Putrajaya, and that he might not even want a deputy if he became prime minister.

Dr Mahathir said he would live in his own house upon his retirement, "...owned by me, built with money which I earned in a very legal way... no bribes or anything like that," he said, adding that the house cost him almost RM1 million.

On another development, Dr Mahathir said he would start his nationwide tour soon. "I am going almost immediately... to at least two states in one week when I am not occupied otherwise."

The Prime Minister had said earlier that he would tour the country ahead of the general elections due by July 2000.

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