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Dr M: No more Cabinet reshuffles until after polls

KOTA TINGGI, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there would be no more Cabinet reshuffles until after the general election.

The Prime Minister said he also did not plan to make any changes in the State leadership until then.

Parliament has to be dissolved by April next year to make way for the next general election.

Dr Mahathir was replying to a question on whether there would be more changes to the Cabinet line-up before the coming general election at a Press conference after a meet-the-people session at Felda Pengeli Timur.

Also present were Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman and Deputy Primary Industries Minister Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein.

Asked whether the Opposition would use the Cabinet reshuffle announced yesterday as an issue, the Prime Minister said it was usual for them to do so.

"It was usual for the Opposition to create issues."

On whether the resignation of Datuk Seri Sabbaruddin Chik as Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister and Datuk Mohamed Rahmat as Information Minister reflected their ineffectiveness, Dr Mahathir said the matter did not arise.

"We make changes when the need arises," he said.

Asked whether there was any hidden motive to the reshuffle, Dr Mahathir said there was none.

"We are very open. When there is a need to carry out a reshuffle, we do it."

Asked about the claims by the Opposition that the Government's move to raise the salary of 190,000 teachers who were certificate holders under the salary scale of DG6 was a political gimmick, he said it was planned long ago.

He also said the Opposition had nothing good to say about what the Government did.

"To them, everything is bad."

Asked if the aggressiveness of the Umno Anti-Defamation Committee in lodging police reports was tantamount to stifling the freedom of expression by the Opposition, Dr Mahathir said:

"Looking from that aspect, it may appear so. But it is necessary to check the accusations by the Opposition.

"If we know that the Opposition likes to make baseless accusations, we need to expose them. And the best way is to make police reports. Let them substantiate their allegations."

On his assessment of the Barisan Nasional in Johor, Dr Mahathir said the support for BN from the people was very strong.

However, as the BN chairman and Umno president, he said he had to visit and meet party members.

On whether he would concentrate on States where BN was not strong, Dr Mahathir said he would do so, especially in places where the Opposition was trying to influence the people.

Asked on the messages he delivered to the BN and Umno leaders in Johor during the closed-door sessions he had with them this morning, Dr Mahathir said he could not disclose them.

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