

Dr M hints of changes in Govt, names new A-G

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last night gave additional hints of imminent changes in Government. Without elaborating, he said the changes could take place before the New Year.

At the same time he announced the appointment of Securities Commission deputy chief executive Datuk Ainum Mohd Said as the new Attorney-General, replacing Tan Sri Mohtar Abdullah who is retiring.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to newsmen after a dialogue and breaking of fast with ambassadors and high commissioners of Islamic countries at the Shangri-La Hotel in Kuala Lumpur.

The Prime Minister was asked to confirm a press report yesterday of an imminent Cabinet reshuffle, including the creation of new ministries.

Dr Mahathir said the reshuffle was merely speculation, fuelled by the appointment of Umno executive secretary Tengku Datuk Adnan Tengku Mansor as a senator last week.

"Since he has been appointed as a senator, they think he will then be appointed to the Cabinet, hence speculations of the reshuffle. But I know of this from Utusan Malaysia, so I have to ask Utusan."

Whether this meant that there would not be any reshuffle, he said: "No. For reshuffle, there is none. But there will be changes, the inclusion of new faces, that's possible."

This included the appointment of parliamentary secretaries, he said.

The Prime Minister did not discount the possibility

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that the post of the parliamentary secretary to the Information Ministry, now vacant, would be filled.

On whether the changes would be major, he said it was relative.

"If you compare it with minor changes, then it will be major, but if compare with major changes, then it will be minor."

Dr Mahathir said there was no need for the Cabinet to be reshuffled, although he admitted that the workload and pressure had increased.

"There is also no reason to create new ministries.

"Our Cabinet is already big, 24 of them now, that even chairs around the table are not enough," Dr Mahathir said.

To a question on whether any ministers had conveyed their decision to quit, Dr Mahathir said: "No, no such good luck."

On when the changes would be announced, he said there was still time and there was no hurry, adding that it could be before the New Year.

Asked whether the new faces would involve new

ministers and new ministries, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't know yet."

On the appointment of Ainum, Dr Mahathir said in jest: "Nowadays, the Government is taken over by women."

"The men are too lazy to learn, they are busy demonstrating." — NST