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Dr Mahathir hints of imminent changes in Government

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight gave additional hints of imminent changes in Government.

Without elaborating, he said the changes, involving members of the administration, could take place before the new year.

He said this when asked to confirm a Press report today of an imminent Cabinet reshuffle, including the creation of new ministries like the Law Ministry and Federal Territory Ministry.

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after a dialogue and breaking of fast with ambassadors and high commissioners of Islamic countries at Shangri-la Hotel.

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

"I do not know anything at all. Since he has been appointed a senator, it (Utusan Malaysia) thinks he will surely be in the Cabinet and we will have a Cabinet reshuffle. But I only know of this from Utusan, so I have to ask Utusan."

On whether he had any plan for a reshuffle, he said: "No. For reshuffle, there is none. (But) just some changes, the inclusion of new faces... that is possible."

This included the appointment of parliamentary secretaries, he said.

The Prime Minister did not discount the possibility that the post of Parliamentary Secretary to the Information Ministry, now vacant, would be filled.

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

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

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.

"My ministers have performed well. Our Government is already big, there are 24 of them (ministers). Even chairs around the Cabinet table are not enough," he said.

To a question about whether any minister had conveyed their intention to quit, Dr Mahathir said: "No, no such good luck."

On whether the changes could be expected before the new year, Dr Mahathir said: "There's no hurry ... there is plenty of time, God willing."

Asked whether the changes would involve new ministers and ministries, Dr Mahathir said: "I don't know yet."

The Prime Minister reshuffled his Cabinet last year which saw two senior ministers - Culture, Art and Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Sabbaruddin Chik and Information Minister Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat - relinquishing their posts.

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