

10/09/2000

PM dismisses speculation about Mohamad Isa resigning

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he has not heard anything about Negri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad wanting to relinquish his post.

"This is news to me. Since you know something about it, why don't you tell me.

"Anyway, I don't like to answer this type of question. When I give my answer, you people like to speculate."

He was asked about the speculation over the position of Mohamad Isa after he opened the KUB Malaysia Bhd headquarters, KUM.com, in Jalan Yap Kwan Seng.

Asked why Mohamad Isa was going on a 15-day leave (if he was not planning to quit), Dr Mahathir said:

"That is normal. Anyway, he is only going on leave for two weeks. I used to go on leave too - for two months. As you know, the last time I did it, I left everything to my deputy."

The weekly schedule given to the Press by the Menteri Besar's office yesterday stated that Mohamad Isa would be on leave from Sept 14 to 29.

In Seremban, Mohamad Isa said there was no basis in the rumours about him stepping down and that neither he nor anybody had brought up the matter.

He said there was also no truth in the speculation that Umno grassroots members in the State were talking about the matter as he had a cordial relationship with them.

"I meet them regularly," said Mohamad Isa, who is also the State Umno and Barisan Nasional chief.

"It is only the newspapers that are talking about the matter. If they (newspapers) did not write about it, the rumours will die off," he told reporters after opening the Negri Sembilan Traditional Food Fair at Taman Seni Budaya.

Mohamad Isa, 51, is Negri Sembilan's longest serving Menteri Besar after being appointed to the post in 1982.

Asked if he would like to clarify the issue, Mohamad Isa said there was nothing to clarify.

"Since there is no truth in the rumours, why should we talk about it?" he asked.

The speculation that Mohamad Isa would be stepping down as Menteri Besar was sparked off by his schedule for the coming week which stated that he would be on two weeks' leave from Sept 14 to 29.

He was scheduled to attend the Commonwealth Parliamentarian Association meeting in London at the time.

Following that, he is expected to attend his daughter's university enrolment together with his wife, Puan Seri Hazizah Tumin.

Asked if it was normal for a Menteri Besar to lead the country's delegation to the CPA meeting, he said it had happened before.

When first asked about him stepping down as Menteri Besar at a function last night, Mohamad Isa declined to comment, saying it would only create unnecessary reactions. He had also said there were rumours that he was supposed to step down last Tuesday but it did not happen.

Rumours that he was stepping down had been rife after the Umno general assembly in May where he lost the contest for one of the three vice-president's posts in a nine-cornered fight.

Mohamad Isa's subsequent failure to be appointed as a member of the Umno supreme council further fuelled speculation about his impending departure.  
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