

Chua stays

PM says there will be no cabinet reshuffle

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By R. Manirajan

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs: The prime minister today dismissed speculation that he will reshuffle the cabinet and also hinted that MCA vice-president Datuk Chua Jui Meng will remain as the health minister.

"You (reporters) know I can hardly make a cabinet reshuffle," Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in jest when asked if there will be a change in the government line-up following recent political developments.

Speculation is rife among the media that there will be a cabinet reshuffle soon or after Budget Day on Oct 19.

Asked if Chua, who was removed as Kedah MCA chief two days ago, will also be removed from the cabinet, Mahathir said: "I have to explain what I was made to understand ... Chua was made the Kedah MCA chief due to problems in that state and he was sent there to solve them."

Mahathir, who is Umno president, said even he was replaced as Kelantan state liaison chief "but that did not mean I had to resign as a prime minister".

"There is no link between both ... he (Chua) was there just on a temporary basis due to problems at the Kedah MCA," he said after opening a CEO conference organised by the International Trade and Industry Ministry.

Mahathir made a minor cabinet reshuffle in February, appointing three new faces and setting up the Women and Family Development Ministry.

Political parties recommend their candidates for appointment to the cabinet but the final decision rests with the prime minister.

Following Chua's removal by MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik on Tuesday, talk is that he would also lose his ministership which will severely reduce his influence among MCA members and the Chinese community.

Although he remains as MCA vice-president, which is an elected post, state chiefs wield greater influence.

Yesterday, Ling accused Chua of trying to "politically assassinate" him.