

Dr M: No Cabinet reshuffle

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THE appointment of a finance minister may not necessarily require a Cabinet reshuffle because a candidate who is not a minister can be selected, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"I can appoint anybody. It does not necessarily have to be another minister," he said when asked if the appointment of a new finance minister would lead to some changes in the Government.

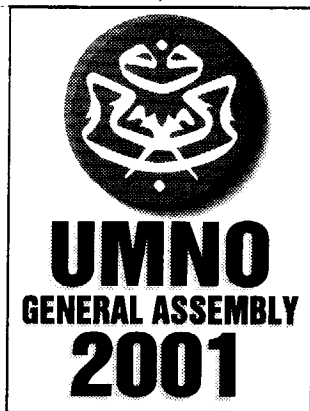
To a question, Dr Mahathir reiterated that there was nothing mysterious about former Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin's resignation and pointed out this was not the first time he had left the Government.

He said Daim wanted to resign as he felt he had done enough for the country and despite the two months' leave given to think about the matter, he still felt strongly about leaving.

"It is a simple explanation ... there is nothing mysterious and there is no fist fight between him and me ... none at all," he told a press conference on the last day of the assembly.

To another question, he said it was not impossible that the tradition of Umno's president and deputy president becoming the country's Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister could change.

"Everything is possible ...



we can even have Senior Ministers here and never leave the power to anybody else.

"(We can) keep it (the power) within the family ... I didn't say anything," he said in jest.

On another matter, he said the Umno supreme council would meet to discuss the setting up of an appeals board.

He said the matter would be raised at the first council meeting convened after the General Assembly, which would also discuss the role of the disciplinary board.

"We have received a proposal to set up an appeals board and will discuss the issue.

"We will also determine who will sit on the board and whether council members should be (board) members or otherwise," he said.

Asked if his advice that

Umno members should be loyal to the president was an indication to prepare for the next general election, the party president said Umno would have to prepare from now.

"Here, when one election is completed the campaign for the next one begins. In other countries, once the election finishes, they can go home and sleep.

"We cannot do that as PAS does not allow us to rest at all. It will go and use mosques to spread lies and curse us," he added.

Dr Mahathir said there were quarters who did not want to see the Malays succeed and would also accuse successful people who had made it on their own of being cronies of the Government.

"You look at a cartoon strip (in Utusan Malaysia) today saying that there are four billionaires in Malaysia but none are Malays.

"How can the Malays attain such success if there are always ill feelings, envy and constant attempts to bring

down the successful ones," he said.

Dr Mahathir also expressed confidence that Umno members' perception of the party have changed positively, judging from their exceptional response during his winding-up speech.

"I can sense they are very supportive of our suggestions (to better the party and the Malays). I feel it is genuine but maybe there are those who think this is *sandiwara* (drama)," he said.