

# PM keeps them guessing over cabinet reshuffle

By **R. Manirajan**

**KUALA LUMPUR, Fri:** Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would neither confirm nor deny today speculation of an impending, major cabinet reshuffle.

Corporate leaders in the city have been speculating the last two days that the prime minister will announce a reshuffle by the end of this month.

Reporters posed the question to him after he

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launched the radio station of the Institute of Islamic Understanding, Malaysia.

He said: "I don't know. It's up to market to speculate and if share prices go up, it's good for them."

Pressed further if there is any truth in the speculation, he said if he says no the share market will drop. "It's difficult to answer your question."

For the third consecutive day, the KL Stock Exchange composite Index (CI) moved up, gaining 9.67 points today, to 626.14.

Yesterday, the CI jumped

19 points or 3.18% while Wednesday saw a 1.19% gain. However, market analysts said there has been some strong interests from foreign investors.

On February this year, Mahathir announced a minor cabinet reshuffle, which saw three new faces and a new ministry.

Asked on the appointment of a new finance minister, Mahathir said the ministry is functioning well so there is no urgency.

"You can ask the staff whether I am able to handle work at the ministry or not.

If I had not attended to work there, of course we'll need a new finance minister."

According to sources, a cabinet reshuffle involving several senior ministers and mentris besar cannot be ruled out. They said the prime minister may want to inject new blood and at the same time, allow those who will be replaced to concentrate on party matters and prepare for the 2004 general election.

However, Mahathir is known to pull a surprise, and may do so again.