

# Govt unlikely to undertake further Cabinet changes

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday said the Government is unlikely to undertake further Cabinet changes in the immediate term.

Dr Mahathir, who returned from a four-day visit to Japan yesterday told reporters at the air force base in Subang that the Government is not looking into the idea at the moment.

"This is not a game. We don't simply pick and choose. There is no guarantee that new people can produce better than the old ones. Change is not always for the better," he said.

He was responding to a question on whether the Government plans to make any more changes in the Cabinet and will appoint any other Members of Parliament (MPs) to the Cabinet.

Dr Mahathir said the Government will sometimes appoint a state assemblyman or those who have not been selected into the Senate with the hope that one day they will be appointed into the Cabinet.

"This is not a new thing."

Asked whether appointment of the non-MP's into the Cabinet will demoralise the MPs, he replied: "As politicians, they should not feel demoralised."

On other younger politicians who may feel that they should be given a chance, Dr Mahathir said the time will come for them.

In the recent Cabinet change, the country's first since the 1999 general election, the Government has appointed People's Progressive Party president Senator Datuk M. Kayveas as Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government.

The Government also created a Women's Affairs Ministry, headed by Datuk Shahrizat Jalil.

The Government has also appointed Jabatan Kemajuan Islam Malaysia (Jakim) director-general Brig-Jen (B) Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

On his visit, Dr Mahathir said he attended a symposium, hosted by Mainichi Shimbun, and was given a chance to voice out his ideas on Japan media reports on Malaysia.

He said many newspapers in Japan are not aware of the real situation in Malaysia and only report news provided by foreign news services.

As such, Dr Mahathir suggested that both Japan and Malaysian newspapers have journalists attached in each other's country to give them the actual situation in both countries.

The Prime Minister also said Okayama has invited Malaysia Airlines to have direct flights from Kuala Lumpur to the city.

The national carrier currently flies direct from Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu to Osaka; Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Langkawi to Tokyo; Kuala Lumpur to Fukuoka and Kuala Lumpur to Nagoya.