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PM: Reshuffle may be announced before Chinese New Year

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hinted today that the impending cabinet reshuffle may be announced before Chinese New Year, which falls on Jan 24.

However, he declined to give details.

"I haven't finalised anything yet. You don't know

how busy I am ... I am hardly in my office," he said after a two-hour meeting with about 1,000 bumiputra petty traders at PWTC.

Asked whether new ministries will be created, Mahathir said he was satisfied with the current set-up. He said the new names will be submitted to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong "as soon as possible".

"I cannot say anything about the reshuffle now because it is not very nice protocol-wise," he said.

Asked whether his deputy, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, will make the announcement if he is away in Japan, he said: "Yes, it is possible."

On whether the reshuffle this time was more difficult

than previous ones, Mahathir said: "No, no, it's not difficult at all. It's just that I'm pressed for time. I'm spinning like a top now. You know me, I don't have much time in the office."

Later, the prime minister attended the National Unity and Social Development Ministry's Hari Raya open house held within the vicinity.