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Dr M confirms impending Cabinet reshuffle

Eirmalasare Bani

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has confirmed that a Cabinet reshuffle is in the works but said he needed time to make a thorough study before the new line-up could be finalised.

He declined to reveal whether any key minister would be affected or comment on the possibility of more women leaders joining the Cabinet.

"Hopefully, soon (the announcement). This is a government, we need to make an indepth study. These things cannot be taken lightly," he told a press conference at the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang yesterday upon returning from a three-day working visit to Myanmar.

"Give me some time to decide. This is not a small matter.

This is not the setting up of some replanting scheme committee... I have to attend a Cabinet meeting tomorrow. If there are views from the Cabinet, we have to listen," he added when pressed for clarification.

Talk of a new Cabinet line-up has been making the rounds since December and was heightened last week when Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Dr Abdul Hamid Othman tendered his resignation to concentrate on activities to unite Muslims.

The resignation letter was submitted to the Prime Minister before he left for Myanmar.

Asked about Abdul Hamid's decision, Dr Mahathir said the vacant post will have to be filled. "He (Abdul Hamid) may have resigned but I think he can still contribute to the Government, may be in another sector or post."

Abdul Hamid was appointed Senator before joining the Cabinet. He had failed to retain his Sik parliamentary seat in the last general election, losing to Pas' Datuk Shahnun Ahmad by less than 500 votes. Abdul Hamid polled 13,026 votes and Shahnun 13,504.

On his visit to Myanmar, Dr Mahathir said the Yangon Government has invited Malaysian companies to invest in the processing of raw materials in the country, as well as in other activities, especially fisheries-related operations.

The Malaysian private sector was also offered opportunities to import agricultural products like chilli, onions, sugar and maize.

"Myanmar is a country blessed with abundant natural resources as well as large agricultural areas," Dr Mahathir said.

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