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MAHATHIR-SPECULATIONS

DR MAHATHIR DISMISSES SPECULATIONS ON NEW FINANCE MINISTER

KUALA LUMPUR, July 7 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today dismissed all speculations on the appointment of the finance minister to replace Tun Daim Zainuddin, saying they were baseless.

"I do not understand why many people speculate. All are baseless but people still want to hear them," he said at a press conference at the end of the Barisan Nasional (BN) Convention here.

Dr Mahathir was asked on a newspaper report today, speculating that the economic adviser to the Prime Minister and former Bank Negara Malaysia governor Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman would be made second finance minister.

"The newspaper can speculate that. You wait and see whether all these speculations are worth anything at all." he said.

The Prime Minister said he has a good team, comprising two deputy finance ministers, Datuk Dr Shafie Mohd Salleh and Datuk Chan Kong Choy; the secretary-general of the finance ministry, Tan Sri Dr Samsuddin Hitam; and the central bank governor, Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz, to help him manage the economy.

"I have advisers namely Tan Sri Ali Abul Hassan Sulaiman and Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop," he added.

Dr Mahathir assumed the post of finance minister when Daim resigned on June 1 this year.

To a question, the Prime Minister said that the government still maintained a loan growth target of 8.0 percent for this year. -- BERNAMA

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