09 JAN 2001
Mahathir-Cabinet
DR MAHATHIR CONFIRMS CABINET RESHUFFLE IMMINENT

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has confirmed that a Cabinet reshuffle is imminent.

Asked when an announcemnet will be made, Dr Mahathir said that he needed time to make a thorough study.

"God willing, hopefully soon. This is a government, we need to make an in-depth study. These things we cannot take lightly," he told a news conference at the Royal Malaysian Air Force (RMAF) base in Subang, near here, today, on his return from a three-day working visit to Myanmar.

Asked whether several ministers will be dropped or whether more women will be included in the new Cabinet, he declined to elaborate.

Dr Mahathir, who earlier denied he would reshuffle the Cabinet appointed following the 1999 general election, said that a Cabinet reshuffle was a serious matter and "not like the formation of a replanting committee".

Asked whether the announcement on the Cabinet reshuffle would be made after the weekly Cabinet meeting tomorrow, the prime minister said that he would attend the meeting and would listen to whatever views expressed by the Cabinet members.

On whether he has identified someone to replace Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Abdul Hamid Othman, Dr Mahathir said that he had not yet thought about it.

Abdul Hamid announced last week that he submitted his resignation letter to Dr Mahathir before the prime minister left for Myanmar.

On the assumption that Abdul Hamid's resignation and the exclusion of several other Umno ministers were to enable them to focus on the party machinery, Dr Mahathir said that Abdul Hamid could still make his contributions.

"He can still make contributions to the government through other positions," he said, without eleborating.

He joked when Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar and Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin arrived while the news conference was proceeding.

"They (the reporters) say that your portfolios have been changed," he said.

Among those present to greet him and Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali were Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, Abdul Hamid and Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

-- BERNAMA

AR AHH RM