

17 JAN 2001

Mahathir-Shahrizat

SHAHRIZAT'S APPOINTMENT BECAUSE OF STRONG PRESSURE, SAYS MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, Jan 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil was made Women's Affairs Minister because of strong pressure calling for the creation of such a new ministry.

"Indeed we value the contribution of women and their role and that is why we created a new ministry," he told reporters after attending a Hari Raya reception with staff of the Prime Minister's Office here today.

Dr Mahathir was approached to comment on today's appointment of two ministers, two deputy ministers and a parliamentary secretary.

Brig Gen Datuk Abdul Hamid Zainal Abidin was appointed Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Senator Datuk Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor as Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk M. Kayveas as Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government and Senator Datuk Zainuddin Maidin as the Parliamentary Secretary of the Information Ministry.

Asked whether Shahrizat would have a deputy to be appointed later, Dr Mahathir said he had not thought of the matter yet.

"We think that for the time being it suffices to have only a minister for the ministry," he said.

On Kayveas' appointment, Dr Mahathir said it was to fill the vacancy for a second deputy minister in the Housing and Local Government Ministry.

"There are some posts that we did not fill when we formed the Government after the 1999 general election...now we are filling them," he said.

Asked if he would consider appointing more ministers and members of the administration, the Prime Minister said: "We have already made the appointments, that's all."

Pointed out that he had merely announced a few appointments and not a Cabinet reshuffle as speculated, he said: "It is the press that talked about a Cabinet reshuffle, not me. I didn't say reshuffle.

"Other people shouldn't get so excited about a reshuffle."

Dr Mahathir said he wanted to appoint someone whom he thought could contribute to the Cabinet after Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman resigned as Minister in the Prime Minister's Department.

He said he was satisfied with the performance of the existing members of the Cabinet.

"Some people may not be satisfied because they have their agenda, but to me they (the ministers) are performing their duties. So I will retain them unless they ask to leave," he said.

On the chances of ministers being dismissed, Dr Mahathir said: "What is the need to drop them. We drop them (only) if they do wrong."

-- BERNAMA

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