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Appointments not made to pacify anyone, says Prime Minister

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the appointments of five MCA leaders to the Cabinet and administration were made to fill vacancies and not to pacify factions in the party.

"We did not take into account Teams A, B or C," the Prime Minister said today at a Press conference in the Parliament lobby after tabling a motion to amend the Federal Constitution.

"There is a need for a replacement because Dr Ling (Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik) has resigned (as Transport Minister)."

The Prime Minister was asked whether the appointments of Datuk Chan Kong Choy and Datuk Fu Ah Kiow from Team B and Datuk Dr Ng Yen Yen, Datuk Donald Lim and Ipoh Barat MP Datuk Ho Cheong Sing from Team A signalled the conclusion of the MCA peace plan he had brokered.

To queries, Dr Mahathir said it was not unusual to have two deputy ministers for a ministry, in this case, the Ministries of Transport and Information.

He said Datuk M. Kayveas' former post as Deputy Housing and Local Government Minister would be filled later, adding that his transfer to the Prime Minister's Department had nothing to do with his expose of the goings-on in the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council.

On the appointment of the first woman Deputy Minister of Finance, he said:

"If we think someone is capable, we appoint. Many of the ministry's senior officials are women."

On why the post was not given to a woman representative from Umno, the Prime Minister replied:

"We have already appointed one as parliamentary secretary. We can't possibly appoint women solely from Wanita Umno. This is not about rights but capability."

Asked by an Abu Dhabi television reporter on whether he was worried that government policies might change when he steps down, Dr Mahathir said all decisions were made collectively by the Cabinet.

"Everybody is bound by the Cabinet decisions taken. So it is not the decision of the PM alone.

"This is the entrenched policy of the Government."

On his successor, Dr Mahathir said he had great confidence in Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"We have worked together for a long time. We know each other very well and our stand in the Cabinet.

"I have no problem working with him. I think he is a very suitable candidate to take over from me."

On whether long-serving Members of Parliament should leave voluntarily, Dr Mahathir said those who could no longer contribute should give way to others or risk being dropped.