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PM: No major Cabinet reshuffle

DATUK Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there will not be a major Cabinet shake-up before he retires later this year, only some "shifting" due to the resignation of former Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik.

"I have to attend to the problem of Dr Ling resigning. I have to do a little bit of shifting, you can call it shuffling," the Prime Minister said when asked about an impending Cabinet reshuffle.

Asked if he had already decided on the matter, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said he was still thinking about it.

"I have not decided yet, I give myself a chance to think. At the moment, I'm more interested in the general assembly," he said at a Press conference at the end of the first day of the Umno general assembly yesterday.

At the end of May, Dr Mahathir had indicated that there could be a Cabinet reshuffle this month.

Dr Mahathir, who defied the conventional financial framework and introduced the ringgit peg and selected capital controls during the 1997/98 regional financial crisis, was also asked if these measures would remain as his legacy.

He said the decision to maintain or discard these financial measures was solely the prerogative of the next Prime Minister. "I'm not interfering in the Government."

Dr Mahathir also said there was no reason to lift the ringgit peg before he leaves office as the Government and business community were happy with it.

On his repeated advice to Umno members in his address this morning, Dr Mahathir said he was merely reminding members and the Malays in general that they could not afford to be complacent in defending the independence of the country.

"I tried to indicate the dangers that we face because there are some people who think that once we have achieved independence, it would remain forever; it (our independence) is not automatic, you have to work hard. If this country is weak or has a Government that is incapable, or a Government that is oppressive, then we may get into problems," he remarked.

The Prime Minister was also asked why he chose to single out Europeans as a threat to the country.

Dr Mahathir said he was merely stating the obvious, as indicated by history.

"If you look into history, all the problems that we have faced originated from them. Now they are trying to impose on us their ideologies, the economic policies and all that, and as a result of that, we have a problem," he said.

He added that Asia, which was set to become the engine of growth of the 21st century, was paralysed by the devaluation of their currencies.

"In one stroke, by attacking the currencies, the people no longer talk about the 21st century as a century for Asia. It is quite obvious it comes from them (the Europeans). If you don't notice it, I don't know what will make you notice," he said.

The Prime Minister said Malaysians were very reluctant to criticise others but the Europeans had no qualms.

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the belief in a build-up towards a

clash of civilisations was gradually being proven right.

"It's becoming that, unfortunately the target seems to be Muslim countries and the Muslim civilisation."