

Hisham passes buck to PM on cabinet reshuffle

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Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein has refused to weigh in on whether there will be a Cabinet reshuffle soon, insisting that only Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak would know.

"The cabinet is only decided by the prime minister and you are not speaking to the prime minister.

"Whether there will be a Cabinet reshuffle or (MIC president G) Palanivel (will be replaced), it is best if you ask Najib," he told a press conference in Kuala Lumpur today.

Speculations of a Cabinet reshuffle grew stronger following the ambiguous position of Palanivel as MIC president. He is also the natural resources and environment minister.

MIC deputy president Dr S Subramaniam claimed that the Registrar of Societies had recognised him as acting president and Palanivel was no longer president following a power struggle.

Prior to this, there were already talk about a potential Cabinet reshuffle to remove dissenting ministers who are upset with Najib's handling of the 1MDB controversy, such as Rural and Regional Development Minister Shafie Apdal.

Hishammuddin's coy response was in contrast to his statement just a month ago where he confidently dismissed speculations that a Cabinet reshuffle was looming.

Hishammuddin had on June 10 described the speculation as a "conspiracy theory", urging the public not to entertain them.

Deferring polls not new

As for the postponement of next year's Umno polls, the party vice-president downplayed the issue.

"I don't think it is something new. It has been done numerous times since Tun (Dr Mahathir Mohamad's) era and Pak Lah (Abdullah Ahmad Badawi).

"I don't know why this has become such a hot issue when it is not new," he said.

Hishammuddin said the postponement was done in order to allow the Umno supreme council to focus on the party.

"We want to focus on the party. We want a stronger party and forward looking for a more constructive transformation," he added.

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