

No cabinet reshuffle, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there will be no cabinet reshuffle during his tenure as prime minister.

“No, not during my time,” he said in an interview with BFM Radio here yesterday.

He was responding to a question on whether a reshuffle of the cabinet was necessary.

According to Dr Mahathir, even though the current ministers were all new to the job, they had a year of experience.

“If I take in a new minister, I would have the task of trying to get him to adjust to a new kind of job. Probably, he would not deliver. A new minister doesn’t mean a better minister.”

He said a cabinet reshuffle would not necessarily solve a problem. Instead, it might create a new one.

“When you reshuffle a cabinet, we would create a lot of problems. It doesn’t solve problems (but it) might create many problems.

“That’s why I’m not keen of having the people’s portfolios changed. I have changed people’s portfolios before I stepped down

but I was called to come back.”

On the issues revolving around controversial preacher Dr Zakir Naik, Dr Mahathir said his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi did not request Malaysia to return Zakir, who is wanted by the Indian authorities since 2016 for alleged money laundering and inciting extremism through hate speeches.

The extradition of Zakir was among the subjects discussed during his meeting with Modi on the sidelines of the fifth Eastern Economic Forum in Russia earlier this month.

According to Dr Mahathir, the government was trying to find a place for the Indian preacher.

“Not many countries want him, India has not insisted (on taking him) when I met Modi (and) he didn’t tell me that he wanted back this man (Zakir).

“We are trying to find some place where he can go, but at the moment, no one wants to accept him.”

He said the government was still looking for ways to help troubled Malaysia Airlines Bhd.

“It’s not easy... we have done a lot.

“The previous government gave them RM6 billion and sacked 6,000 people and, in addition, reduced the number of flights.

“So, if you reduce the personnel and the number of flights, the ratio between personnel and the activities doesn’t change.”

Dr Mahathir said there was talk that some companies might take a stake in the airline, but noted that there were also those who were very sentimental and wanted to see the company owned entirely by Malaysians.

“But, there is no Malaysian investor strong enough to take it up.”

When asked what was the government’s deadline to decide on the fate of Malaysia Airlines and if it would adopt Proton Holdings Bhd’s strategy of selling a stake to China’s Zhejiang Geely Holding Group, he said that it would not be easy.

“As you know, Malaysia Airlines has undergone many changes, including changes in



The government is still looking for ways to help troubled Malaysia Airlines Bhd. FILE PIC

the management and sacking of 6,000 workers... and yet, the losses remain high.”

He said when the national airline was formed, there were no low-cost carriers like today.

This, he said, affected not only Malaysia Airlines, but others as well.

Over the weekend, a business daily reported that Japan Airlines might acquire a stake in Malaysia Airlines, which is majority-owned by Khazanah Na-

sional Bhd.

Earlier in the interview, Dr Mahathir said the government was looking to dispose of its non-essential properties both locally and abroad, in a move to settle the huge debt that the Pakatan Harapan inherited from the previous government.

“We have to find a good price. We have properties in Hong Kong, Singapore and other countries, not only at home.” **Bernama**