

Dr M chairs first cabinet meeting

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PUTRAJAYA, May 23 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today chaired the first meeting of his new Cabinet at Perdana Putra here.

The meeting, which began at 9.25 am, was attended by all the 13 ministers led by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail who were sworn in on Monday.

Before the meeting began, Dr Mahathir and all the members of the Cabinet posed for a group photograph.

Also present were Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Dr Ali Hamsa and Cabinet deputy secretary-general Tan Sri Mazidah Abdul Majid.

It was the first Cabinet meeting after Pakatan Harapan (PH) led by Dr Mahathir won the 14th General Election (GE14) on May 9.

At a press conference after the three-hour Cabinet meeting, Dr Mahathir said the mood of the meeting was well and wonderful.

"There was no definite agenda, but we discussed administrative matters, especially the

financial problems. I was informed that the country's debt had already reached RM1 trillion."

"Everyone contributed (to the meeting). I allowed them to speak to show them that I'm not a dictator," he said.

Asked if a press conference after a Cabinet meeting would be a weekly affair, Dr Mahathir replied: I am not sure .

Normally, we would like to tell the press and keep in touch so that you (media) receive from us the actual things we want to tell you.

"If not, you will go around making all kinds of fake news. Since we are abolishing the law, we cannot catch you," he quipped.

Dr Mahathir also said that 12 more ministers would be appointed as soon as possible and he did not discount the possibility of increasing the number of ministers.

Dr Mahathir, 92, returned to helm the government after he was sworn in as Malaysia's seventh prime minister following PH's victory, making him the oldest prime minister in the world.

He was also Malaysia's fourth prime minister, from 1981 to 2003.

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