



## Umno ministers laugh off 'Sheraton Move 2' speculation

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PUTRAJAYA: Several ministers from UMNO had a breakfast meeting in a luxury hotel here, sparking speculation of another "Sheraton Move" but they have since downplayed such talk, saying it was normal for them to meet after a Cabinet session.

One minister, who was at the breakfast, explained that a few of them would usually get together for lunch after Cabinet meetings.

"Today (yesterday), we decided to get together for breakfast because the meeting started late.

"Furthermore, we cannot have lunch as it is Friday. We need to go for prayers right after the meeting," said the minister.

The Cabinet meeting started at 10am yesterday as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob was the guest of honour at the 215th Police Day celebrations earlier.

The weekly meeting is usually held on Wednesday, but is shifted to Friday instead when Parliament is in session.

The minister found it rather amusing that a short catch-up among Cabinet colleagues had triggered all sorts of speculation.

“Don’t think too much about it. Tak ada apa-apa (It’s nothing),” he said.

Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim concurred, saying he and his Cabinet colleagues would regularly share a meal after Cabinet meetings.

“Today, I came late. I was there for just two minutes and then we had to leave for the Cabinet session,” he said.

Rural Development Minister Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid was also quoted as denying that the gathering was a secret meeting.

“When was the meeting? There was no discussion about dissolving Parliament. There wasn’t even a meeting,” he was quoted as saying by a Malay daily.

Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin also laughed off speculation over the meal.

“(Housing and Local Government Minister) Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican paid for the breakfast. It had nothing to do with dissolving Parliament.

“We just had not met in a long time, so we decided to catch up,” he said.

The group of Umno ministers at the hotel included Communications and Multimedia Minister Tan Sri Annuar Musa, National Unity Minister Datuk Halimah Mohamed Sadique, Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives Minister Tan Sri Noh Omar and Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Dr Noraini Ahmad.

Besides the Prime Minister, there are 10 Umno ministers in the Cabinet.

The others are Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein, who is also one of four Senior Ministers, and Datuk Seri Dr Adham Baba (Science, Technology and Innovation).

Nusantara Academy for Strategic Research Azmi Hassan also downplayed talk of any clandestine meetings.

“The group calling for an early GE15 is different from the group at the breakfast,” he noted.

However, Azmi did not rule out the possibility that the failed tabling of the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (Sosma) was a topic of discussion among them.

Home Minister Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin, who tabled the motion, has claimed that government backbenchers deliberately left Parliament when the bloc vote was called.

He pointed out that it was known that Hamzah did not have cordial relations with Umno as he had jumped ship to Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia after Barisan Nasional's defeat in the 2018 general election.

The just-concluded Umno general assembly heard loud calls for the national polls to be held soon. The calls grew louder after the motion on the Sosma provision was voted down.

During the voting, 86 MPs voted against the motion, 85 supported it while another 49 MPs were absent.

The current term of Parliament expires in June next year.