

MAHATHIR HAPPY WITH MUSA'S DECISION

PM on his trip to Sabah next month

IPOH, Sat. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he was glad Datuk Musa Hitam has withdrawn his resignation as Umno deputy president but would not comment on the Cabinet positions Datuk Musa had vacated.

He stressed however that Datuk Musa's decision would not — and had never — affected party unity.

The matter was for the Umno Supreme Council to decide, he told reporters at the airport here before leaving for Trolak Felda scheme at the end of his three-day visit to Perak.

He said it was the Supreme Council which sent a delegation (of four Menteri Besar) to see Datuk Musa in London and anything on the matter was a "collective decision".

Datuk Seri Mahathir said he would fix a date for the Supreme Council to meet.

He confirmed receiving a letter from Datuk Musa which was handed to him late last night by Terengganu Menteri Be-

sar Datuk Haji Wan Mochtar.

Datuk Haji Wan Mochtar arrived just before midnight together with Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Najib Tun Razak and Johore Menteri Besar Datuk Ajib Ahmad who had returned earlier from London after meeting Datuk Musa.

Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Ramli Ngah Talib had returned earlier in view of Dr Mahathir's visit to Perak.

Meeting

The four MBs and Dr Mahathir had a short meeting at the Royal Casuarina Hotel following which Datuk Wan Mochtar told the Press that the Supreme Council would meet shortly to discuss Datuk Musa's decision.

He added that the Prime Minister appeared to be quite happy with the achievement of the delegation when he read Datuk Musa's letter.

He himself was satisfied with the success of the mission.

He expected Datuk Musa to return for the second Supreme Council meeting.

Asked about Datuk Mu-

● TURN TO P2, COL.10

● FROM PAGE ONE

sa's letter, Dr Mahathir said Datuk Musa told him "we could withdraw his resignation from the post of deputy president of Umno and thanked the Supreme Council."

Asked whether he had anybody in mind to fill the Cabinet positions left vacant by Datuk Musa's exit, he said: "This is a \$64,000 question. I don't answer such questions. It was not a law that the deputy president of Umno must be Deputy Prime Minister... it's a practice.

"If the deputy president of Umno does not want to become Deputy Prime Minister, it will not create a problem."

On whether he accepted the reasons given by Datuk Musa for leaving the Cabinet, Dr Mahathir said: "It is not a question of me accepting it or not. It is up to the Supreme Council to decide on these things. I did not make any decision except as a collective member of the Supreme Council."

Asked whether he preferred the Supreme Council to deliberate on Datuk Musa's decision, he said: "It is not a matter of preference. It is a question of the right of the Supreme Council to discuss this thing. It is their decision. We don't make individual decisions. We make collective decisions."

Dr Mahathir was asked whether Datuk Musa's decision would have any consequences for party unity.

"I don't think there will

be any consequences. Right from the beginning party unity has not been in question at all. As far as I can see all the telegrams and statements I have received have stressed that there will be party unity and support for the Supreme Council as well as the president. So there is no question of it at all. Even Johore has not withdrawn support for the president. So this talk about party unity I think is irrelevant."

On his three-day visit to Perak, Dr Mahathir said it was a "wonderful visit" and he was happy with the good turnout of people.

"Although we did not hold any rally, nevertheless there were people who wanted to show their overwhelming support for the Government.

"Even my wife who had a separate programme of visits was impressed with the large turnouts. There were gatherings of 2,000 to 3,000 people and she's not used to such kinds of crowds on her own."

On his forthcoming visit to Sabah in April, he said the purpose is to see development, progress, to learn about the problems and to see what can be done. It is for the same reasons that he is visiting various parts of country.

Asked whether he thought it safe to go to Sabah in the light of the spate of bombing incidents, he said: "I think the police are quite capable of taking care of that. I don't think anybody and I for that matter will be in danger. If there is, the police will say so. I don't see any problem."

Asked whether the bombings might have been prevented if Barisan Nasional had accepted the PBS into its fold, he said: "We have to decide in the first place whether the bombings are political or not and who are behind the bombings. All these things have to be studied. We don't make the decision because some bombings have happened and we accuse people. No, I don't think so. I don't think we should blame anybody before looking into it thoroughly."