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No new deputy speaker yet, says Mahathir

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — The post of Dewan Rakyat Deputy Speaker to be vacated by Mr D.P. Vijandran is unlikely to be filled soon.
Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that no replacement was being considered for the moment, and Dewan Rakyat Speaker Tan Sri Mohamed Zahir Ismail saw "no urgency" to appoint a new man.
The prime minister

laughed when reporters suggested that the post was being kept vacant because the next general election would be held soon.
He declined to say whether the new man would be from the MIC or the MCA, whose MP for Ayer Hitam Datuk Dr Hee Tien Lai had held the post from June 1982 until July 1983.
The former MIC secre-

tary-general, embroiled in the videotapes controversy, had been appointed in October 1986.
Dr Mahathir also did not want to say how he felt about Mr Vijandran's decision to quit. "He made the decision to resign . . . I don't have to make any comment," he said.
At a separate function, Tan Sri Zahir told newsmen that it was unlikely

that the post would be filled during the next Dewan Rakyat meeting, from Monday to March 16.
"There is no urgency to do so. The sittings will be handled by Datuk Haji Amin Haji Daud (the other deputy speaker) and myself."
"I do not foresee any problem . . . it is a short meeting and if we need help, we can always ask

an MP to assist us," he said.
At any rate, he said, the Dewan Rakyat Standing Orders required an MP to notify the Secretary of Parliament on the nomination for the post of deputy speaker in writing at least 14 days before a meeting of the House.
It is understood that the notice could only be given after Mr Vijandran's letter of resignation is re-

ceived.
Tan Sri Zahir did not know how the letter would be addressed, but said there could be a "technical problem."
The Constitution required that such a letter be addressed to the Secretary of the House, and not to the speaker, he said.
He was referring to the statement by MIC presi-

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dent Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu yesterday that Mr Vijandran's letter would be handed to the speaker tomorrow.

Tan Sri Zahir commended Mr Vijandran's move. "His decision to resign to avoid embarrassing the Barisan Nasional is a very noble gesture. I respect his decision and so should others," he said.

The decision also brought relief to Barisan leaders.

"It is a wise decision and a relief to all those concerned. It is a wise move in line with the reflection of the feeling and thinking of all Malaysians who have been following the issue," MCA deputy president Lee Kim Sai said in a statement.

Mr Lee said the MCA had all along refrained from prejudging Mr Vijandran and felt that "compelling Mr Vijandran to resign from his post through a motion in the Dewan Rakyat is unnecessary."

Penang Chief Minister Dr Lim Chong Eu said the resignation should "put an end to any political discussion" on the videotapes controversy.

Dr Lim, who is Gerakan national adviser, added at his weekly press conference: "I hope his decision will take the matter out of further political discussion."

DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang said the party would go ahead with its motion against Mr Vijandran in the Dewan Rakyat.

"With this latest development, it is even more imperative that Vijandran be referred to the Committee of Privileges," he added in a statement.

Bar Council secretary Manjeet Singh Dhillon said the resignation was "in keeping with the practice followed by countries all over the world."

He said it was normal for a high-ranking officer to resign when an allegation against him was being investigated.

"Had this occurred a long time ago, Mr Vijandran would have received the respect of the public for being a person who puts the nation before him," Mr Manjeet Singh added.