

Supreme council: Ghafar will open Wanita, Youth assemblies

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By Adlin M. Zabri and Jeffrey Ramayah

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The Umno supreme council today decided that deputy president Abdul Ghafar Baba will officiate at the joint opening of the party's Youth and Wanita assemblies on Nov 4.

The decision was made after the matter was discussed at a council meeting today.

Announcing the decision, Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said: "The council agreed that the tradition whereby the deputy president opens the joint assemblies be maintained."

Some members suggested that the Wanita and Youth as-

semblies be opened by their respective heads. This followed an earlier decision by the council that the annual divisional meetings be opened by their respective chiefs.

Speaking at a Press conference after the meeting, Dr Mahathir also announced that Land and Co-operative Development Minister Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai had been appointed Sabah Umno liaison chief, replacing Ghafar who announced his resignation from the post on Sept 30.

The appointment would take effect immediately, he added.

In his announcement, Ghafar had said that he gave up the post because he did not enjoy the co-operation of 19 Umno division heads in Sabah. He also

resigned from his post as head of the Sabah Barisan Nasional.

The BN supreme council would decide later on its Sabah head.

When asked whether the council considered a proposal that Ghafar be appointed a senior minister, Dr Mahathir said: "We haven't reached that stage yet and I don't see why there should be such a proposal."

Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib recently proposed that Ghafar be appointed a senior minister if he failed in his bid to retain the deputy presidency.

Dr Mahathir said the council also endorsed all divisional meetings already completed, including that of the Youth and Wanita wings.

It also endorsed a decision by the Federal Territory liaison committee that the Labuan and Batu divisions hold their meetings again on Oct 17.

Datuk Rahim Bakar and Datuk Hussein Ahmad will represent the council at the Batu meeting while Hassan Harun and Datuk Khalid Yunus would attend the Labuan meeting.

The Labuan and Batu divisions had to reconvene their meetings following complaints from members that their earlier meetings were held without the full participation of the branches.

The council also endorsed a decision by the Johor liaison committee that the Batu Pahat

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Eight who turned to courts expelled

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Youth divisional meeting be reconvened under the supervision of the division.

Dr Mahathir added that the council also decided to expel the eight party members who obtained court injunctions to stop their divisions from holding their annual meetings.

When asked whether the eight could appeal, Dr Mahathir said: "They can appeal but it is likely that we will not entertain appeals from people who deliberately violate party rules and regulations."

The eight are Zaimi Mohd Noor, Mohamed Disa Mat Aras and Ishak Sapar from

the Tapah division, Ahmad Murad Zohudi and Yeop Kamarudin Yang (Batu Gajah), Ismail Mohamed and Mohamed Suhaimy Abdul Samad (Bagan) and Ariff Mansor (Pengkalan Chepa).

Dr Mahathir said the council also agreed to amend the party constitution to ensure that protests against proceedings of meetings be made at the start of a particular meeting.

"We will not allow protests to be made after the meetings," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the counting of votes during the party election would be computerised.

The council also agreed to recognise Kelab Umno UAE, which would be sending a representative to the assembly.

Dr Mahathir said the party also extended its condolences to the family of Mat Aznan Awang, who was killed in action in Somalia on Oct 4.

When asked about the BN's chances of winning the Kampung Raja State by-election in Terengganu, Dr Mahathir said: "We are confident of winning".

Later, party secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said the proposed amendment to the party constitution to disallow pro-

tests after meetings was to prevent abuse of the constitution.

"We will form a committee to review the constitution and party rules to prevent disruption of party meetings.

"There are some who purposely bring non-members or members who are bankrupts to meetings as an excuse to later seek a declaration that the meeting was null and void. They would resort to this should they or their candidates lose in the election," he said.

Mohamed said it was not likely that amendments can be tabled at this year's general assembly.