

Ghafar resigns as Deputy Prime Minister

By OUR REPORTERS

GHAFAR Baba has resigned as Deputy Prime Minister but indications are that he will continue to strive to retain the deputy presidency in the November 4 Umno elections.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad confirmed last night that he received the resignation letter, forwarded by Ghafar's political secretary, on Thursday evening although it was dated Friday. He, however, has not decided whether to accept the resignation.

He told reporters at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Subang before departing for an official visit to Malta and to attend the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Cyprus that he was "not too surprised" because he had heard rumours about the pending resignation.

Dr Mahathir said Ghafar gave no reasons for the move. Asked for his reaction he said he had none but said "arrangements" will be taken "to deal with the situation."

Asked if anyone will act in Ghafar's portfolio, he said there is no such thing as an acting deputy prime minister. Asked how the administration of the country will be affected now that he is going to Malta and Cyprus, Dr Mahathir said it will not be affected.

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the Government.

During his campaign visits in the run-up to the Umno elections, Ghafar, 68, had said that he only wants to be retained as party deputy president so that he can continue to serve Umno, that anyone else can be appointed deputy prime minister.

Tamrin, who is MP for Batu Berendam, said Ghafar "has only resigned from the Cabinet." Ghafar had also held the rural development portfolio.

Asked where Ghafar is at present, he replied: "He is overseas."

Ghafar's last official duty before his resignation was to head a delegation on a week-

long visit to North Korea. He had left for Pyongyang on October 5 and is expected to return to Kuala Lumpur this evening.

Speculation on his impending resignation was rife even before he left for North Korea.

Ghafar is being challenged by Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim for the post of Umno deputy president. Of the 151 Umno divisions which have held their meetings, 143 have nominated Anwar while Ghafar has received seven nominations.

The Kubang Pasu Division did not make any nomination. Two more divisions have yet to meet.

"Even when Ghafar went on holiday nothing happened," he added.

The Prime Minister said he had not received any resignation letter from any other Cabinet member, and said he did not want to speculate on what would happen next "it is not unusual for people to resign."

Asked if he expects any problems to crop up following Ghafar's resignation, he said: "In some countries there may be coups, but I don't expect one in Malaysia."

Ghafar's son Tamrin, when disclosing his father's resignation from his government positions earlier yesterday, stressed that Ghafar has only quit the Cabinet and that he remains the party's number two and MP for Jasin.

The announcement confirmed rumours that had been swirling in Kuala Lumpur since early this month that Ghafar will contest the party elections from outside

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