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Dr M yet to find candidate for Selangor MB post

PRIME Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he has not found a candidate to succeed Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, who resigned as Selangor Menteri Besar on Monday.

"No, not yet. I have not found the candidate," he told reporters after chairing a nationwide videoconferencing session via 28 link-up centres with some 13,000 participants.

The Prime Minister was asked by reporters when he would seek an audience with the Sultan of Selangor on the appointment of a new menteri besar.

He also declined to comment on the statement by Muhammad on Monday that he would remain as Umno vice-president and State Assemblyman for Batang Kali.

"No comment ... No comment," Dr Mahathir said when asked to respond to calls by certain Umno members who urged Muhammad to step down as Umno vice-president.

On Monday, Muhammad announced that he will remain as the Umno vice president and State Assemblyman for Batang Kali, explaining that he was elected by the people for these posts and will leave it to Umno members to decide whether to accept his decision for not stepping down from these posts.

On Saturday, Dr Mahathir had announced Muhammad's resignation as Selangor Menteri Besar, state Umno liaison chief and Barisan Nasional chairman for Selangor and Federal Territory.

The former menteri besar is facing a charge of failing to declare cash in foreign currencies, equivalent to A\$1.2 million or about RM2.4 million, while leaving Australia for New Zealand at the Brisbane International Airport on December 22 last year.

He also faces an additional charge of making a false declaration pertaining to the cash found in his luggage.

NST reports: Later in the evening, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said Muhammad's position as Umno vice-president would be decided by the party.

Speaking to reporters after chairing a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Social Ills at the National Unity and Community Development Ministry, he said:

"We have to respect his decision to resign as Selangor Menteri Besar to protect the image of Umno and the Government. His position in the party will be decided by the party ... it is a party matter and we will manage it that way."

When pointed out that Muhammad had yesterday stated that he would hold on to his post as Umno vice-president until the 1999 party elections, Anwar said Umno respected the stand.

"Muhammad has met me and the party president and in our discussion, we have agreed that this (vice-president post) will be handled as a party matter."

Asked on the possibility of Umno directing Muhammad to relinquish his party post, the Deputy Prime Minister said the matter had yet to arise.

He added there are provisions in the party's constitution related to its vice-presidents relinquishing their posts.

On whether the party would face any problem in the event that its vice-presidents were asked to step down, Anwar added the matter did not arise at the moment.

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