

# LEFT <sup>49</sup> VACANT

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## Dr M: DPM post to be filled after Umno polls

By SHAMSUL AKMAR and WAN HAMIDI HAMID

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has decided to defer the appointment of a new deputy prime minister until after the next party elections.

Speaking to reporters after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting last night, the Prime Minister said the issue was discussed generally at the meeting but did not touch specifically on the appointment of a deputy prime minister.

"It is not within the jurisdiction of the supreme council. It is my right to appoint a deputy prime minister, what are his qualifications and so on.

"I don't have to refer to anybody on this matter. That is my prerogative (as the Prime Minister)," he said.

└ 10 sacked, 18 get show-cause letters:  
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Dr Mahathir said the meeting also decided that there was no need to appoint an acting Umno deputy president as the two vicepresidents - Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak - could take over the job functions.

"If I'm out of the country, I will appoint any one of the ministers who will do certain jobs that have to be done by my ministries.

"But that does not amount to appointing a deputy prime minister," he added.

Asked whether he was any closer to decide on who would be the deputy prime minister, Dr Mahathir said: "Not any closer."

On whether he would like to convey a message to US President Bill Clinton on the issue of human rights, the Prime Minister said:

"We are not beholden to them. We run our country in our own way. We also have a number of things we would like the American Government to do.

"We think that if we mind our own business, it would be better for everybody. Before we question publicly, we should have the courtesy to ask our representatives of what actually is happening on the ground."

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on the US State Department's statement expressing concern on human rights abuse against Anwar who had alleged he was assaulted by the police while in custody

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Dr M: Be

careful  
about

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firing  
missiles

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The Prime Minister also said he had recently sent a letter to Clinton who had asked him to support the actions taken to fire cruise missiles into Sudan and Afghanistan.

He said he was not in a position to support such action because there was no proof that the bombed pharmaceutical factory produced nerve gas and some chemicals.

"I consider that a violation of human rights. Similarly, one should not fire missiles over a country which has problems with your own country.

"People should be very careful about firing missiles over other countries because these missiles are not perfect. They might drop in a country over which they are passing on the way to their destination," he said.

Najib, who is Umno disciplinary and management committee co-chairman, said the meeting decided not to highlight claims that about 90 division chiefs were allegedly offered money by Anwar during his tenure as the party's deputy president.

He said the meeting decided the allegation made by Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, who is also a supreme council member, did not have enough evidence.