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Mahathir-Successor

MAHATHIR MAINTAINS HIS POSITION NOT TO APPOINT A DEPUTY YET

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 8 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today maintains his position not to appoint a deputy until the next Umno elections, scheduled next year.

Asked who will take over should anything happen to him, he said: "The party will decide. We have vice presidents...they will decide who will be the successor if I pop up".

Dr Mahathir said as there are now two Umno vice presidents, the party would decide between the two candidates.

"If I were to appoint one (VP), it will disappoint one," he told reporters after opening the general assembly of the Commonwealth Public Administration and Management in Bangi, near here.

Asked if the Umno elections would be brought forward for that purpose, he said: "It is not possible".

Dr Mahathir sacked Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance last Wednesday.

Anwar was stripped of his party post of deputy president on Thursday after appearing before the Umno Supreme Council, the party's highest decision-making body.

Dr Mahathir told a news conference to announce Anwar's sacking from the party on Thursday that he has no plans to appoint a deputy until the party elections next year.

With the absence of a deputy president, Umno's second echelon now comprises two vice presidents -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak who is Education Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

The other VP, Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, who is facing court action, has taken leave from his party post.

-- BERNAMA

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