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Najib and Abdullah to head panel (HL)

Saiful Azhar Abdullah; Aionon Mohd LANGKAWI, Fri. - Umno vice-presidents Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi will head the party's management and disciplinary committee replacing Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the two would head the committee as he didn't want to be seen as favouring either of them.

"The two vice-presidents are already in the committee and the duties (of the chairman) will be given to them.

"However, the decisions of the committee will still have to be referred to the supreme council (which) will make the final decision," the Prime Minister said when asked by reporters whether he had made a decision on who would take over the chairmanship of the committee following the removal of Anwar as Deputy Prime Minister and his sacking from Umno for alleged moral misconduct.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters at the Langkawi International Airport after visiting the Langkawi International Shooting Range to present medals to winners of a Commonwealth Games shooting event.

Asked what he meant by the two of them heading the committee, Dr Mahathir said: "It is a joint chairmanship... I cannot have one or the other because I am afraid (choosing either one of them) will give an advantage to one of them as a person of choice."

Umno has three elected vice-presidents. The third, Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, is on leave following charges of falsely declaring the money he took into Australia in December 1996 and failing to declare more than A\$1.2 million when he left the country.

He was acquitted of both the charges on May 30.

Asked whether the committee would decide at its next meeting on action to be taken against Umno leaders and members who took part in Anwar's roadshow since his sacking, Dr Mahathir said: "We will see how long they will follow...most probably they are either curious or confused and when they know the truth, they will return to the right path."

On what was the appropriate action to be taken against those who decided to continue to support Anwar, he said he could not predict what the supreme council would decide.

In Kuala Lumpur, Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said the management and disciplinary committee would hold a meeting soon to discuss the fate of Umno members found to have backed Anwar in his so-called reformation movement.

The matter would also be discussed at the Umno supreme council meeting on Oct 3.

Sabbaruddin said since Anwar was not an Umno member any more, members who supported him had gone against the party's decisions.

"As Umno members we must support the decision of the party leadership," he told reporters after launching the domestic tourism exposition organised by the Malaysian Tourism Promotion Board.

The meeting will be the first by the committee after Anwar's expulsion. Others in the committee are Wanita Umno head Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman, Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and information chief Datuk Dr Yusof Nor.

Sabbaruddin said the supreme council would also discuss the various allegations against Malaysia made by former Singapore Prime Minister Lee

Kuan Yew in his book, The Singapore Story: Memoirs of Lee Kuan Yew.  
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