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Mahathir-Deputy

NO APPOINTMENT OF DPM, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he would not appoint a new deputy prime minister until after the Umno elections next year.

" We have decided not to fill the post of deputy prime minister until the next party polls, " he told reporters after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting here tonight.

He said the meeting only discussed the appointment of a deputy prime minister in general following the sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on Sept 2.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said the appointment of his deputy was his prerogative.

" It is not the jurisdiction of the supreme council but it is my prerogative. It is my responsibility and I need not consult anyone," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he would appoint any of the ministers to carry out the work of his own ministries if he had to go overseas.

Dr Mahathir is also the Home Minister and First Finance Minister.

"If I am out of the country, I will appoint any one of the ministers who will do some of the job of my own ministries but that does not amount to appointing a deputy prime minister," he said.

Asked if he was any closer to appointing a deputy prime minister, he said: "I'm not any closer. I have not made my decision."

He also said the duties of Umno deputy president would be performed by the two vice-presidents -- Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"We (the supreme council) did not appoint anyone for the deputy president's post. The duties of deputy president will be performed jointly by the vice-presidents," he said.

The deputy president's post is vacant following the expulsion of Anwar from Umno on Sept 3, a day after he was sacked as deputy prime minister and finance minister.

Dr Mahathir said the supreme council also accepted proposals by the Umno Constitution Amendments Committee headed by party secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik to change certain provisions in the party constitution.

He, however, did not specify the amendments.

The proposed amendments are believed to involve scrapping of the 10 bonus votes for each nomination for the post of president and deputy president and lowering the party membership age from 18 to 16.

-- BERNAMA

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