

04/09/1998

Umno votes to expel Anwar

UMNO last night sacked its deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, a day after he was removed as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister.

Prime Minister and party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced the decision at about 1 am after chairing a four-hour meeting of the Umno Supreme Council in Kuala Lumpur.

Anwar attended the meeting but left about 15 minutes before it ended.

Dr Mahathir told a press conference that the Umno supreme council did not need to give the reasons for sacking Anwar, but he said Anwar was given ample time to state his position on the allegations against him and all Supreme Council members were given the opportunity to speak up.

The decision to expel Anwar from the party was unanimous.

"Members felt that he should step down or be expelled from the party. Anwar said he was not prepared to leave the party but will accept the decision made by the supreme council.

"After he left the meeting, I explained further to the members and asked whether a decision be made through a secret ballot or to do it openly.

"The supreme council decided that it be done through a consensus. The decision was unanimous," Dr Mahathir said.

He said the post of Umno deputy president would remain vacant until next year's party elections.

All the supreme council members, except vice-presidents Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, attended the meeting and were present at the press conference.

Abdullah, who is Foreign Minister, is in Durban, South Africa, for the Non-Aligned Movement meeting while Muhammad is on leave pending disposal of his court case.

Dr Mahathir described their presence at the press conference as a bit unusual.

"This is to show that the council's decision is a consensus... all members supported the decision without exception."

When a foreign reporter pointed out that Anwar had been seen as his heir apparent, Dr Mahathir said, "yes, I am saddened by this (turn of events)".

"If it had not happen when the country is facing economic problems, we could stand together and solve the problems, but things have gone out of my control."

(END)