

07/10/1998

Umno deputy chief's post to stay vacant until party polls

THE post of Umno deputy president will be filled only at the party's general election next year, Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad says.

The post has been left vacant since September 3 when former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was expelled for alleged moral misconduct.

Speaking to reporters after chairing a three-hour Umno supreme council meeting in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the duties of the deputy president will in the meantime be assumed by the current vice presidents, who are Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, and former Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Seri Muhammad Muhammad Taib.

On the post of Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said the appointment is his prerogative and responsibility.

If he has to go abroad, any of the ministers will be appointed to carry out the work of his ministries, Dr Mahathir said. "... but that does not amount to appointing a deputy prime minister."

On whether he is closer to appointing a deputy, he said: "I have not made any decision."

The supreme council meanwhile expelled 10 members and issued show cause letters to 18 others, including former Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, for their involvement in anti-party activities.

Those expelled were Umno Youth assistant secretary Saifuddin Nasution Ismail, Negri Sembilan Umno Youth chief Ruslan Kassim, Penang Umno Youth chief Dr Abdul Rahim Ghouse, Petaling Jaya Selatan division deputy youth chief Ezam Mohd Noor, and Pasir Mas division youth chief Dr Wan Hasni Wan Sulaiman.

The others are Mohd Yahya Mohd Sharif, Abdul Shafid Omar and Putus Omar from the Kuala Selangor division, and Lokman Adam (Sri Gading) and Baharudin Ibrahim (Rasah).

Umno Youth deputy chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein was appointed the acting youth chief.

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