

06/02/1999

Council nod for DPM to take over duties of Umno deputy president

THE Umno Supreme Council yesterday agreed with a proposal to allow Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to take over the responsibilities of deputy president which was left vacant since last September.

Abdullah, who is one of Umno's three vice-presidents, however clarified that the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's proposal did not mean that he is the Acting Umno deputy president.

"The council accepted the president's proposal who felt that there should be a person carrying out the deputy president's responsibilities," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur after the three-hour Umno Supreme Council meeting yesterday.

The deputy president's post fell vacant following the expulsion of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on September 3 last year, a day after he was sacked as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister. "I am not appointed as deputy president or acting deputy president, but was directed to perform the duties of the deputy president's," he added.

Abdullah, appointed as the Deputy Prime Minister on January 11, chaired part of the Supreme Council meeting after Dr Mahathir excused himself from the meeting to bade farewell to his Cambodian counterpart Hun Sen.

To a question on the implications of the new appointment towards his existing workload, Abdullah, who is also the Home Minister, said there will be more work and more responsibility for him, and he will try his best to perform them. The Supreme Council also decided to postpone branch level party election, which is scheduled for this year, until the country's general election.

Abdullah said this is to allow Umno and the Barisan Nasional to give full attention to what needs to be done for the coming general election and the Sabah election.

He noted that Dr Mahathir is also scheduled to visit all states to meet the rakyat as well as BN component parties' leaders after his official trip to Kingston, Jamaica, to attend the Group of 15 developing countries meeting.

The Supreme Council also agreed with the Government's decision to stop building new highways until Malaysians are willing to accept that quality roads come at a price.

(END)