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Daim reappointed Umno treasurer, Mustapa is info chief

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FINANCE Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin has been reappointed Umno treasurer while Finance Ministry adviser Datuk Mustapa Mohamed is the party's new information chief, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced yesterday.

Tan Sri Khalil Yaakub has also been reappointed Umno secretary-general, while the 10 appointed Umno Supreme Council members will be announced within the next two weeks, he said.

Speaking at a news conference after chairing the first Umno Supreme Council meeting since the party's general assembly in May, the Prime Minister said he will decide on the 10 appointed council members before the next meeting.

Under the Umno constitution, the party president has the power to appoint 10 supreme council members in addition to the 25 council members elected by delegates to the party's general assembly. The posts of secretary-general, treasurer and information chief are also appointed by the Umno president.

"We have also agreed to rotate the venue for the supreme council meetings between Kuala Lumpur and the states, so that we can see what the situation is in the states and get close to them," he said, adding that no decision has been reached on which state will host the next meeting.

On the 10 appointed council members, Dr Mahathir said he has to be very careful in appointing them as there are many qualified candidates, including women and menteris besar.

"Many are qualified, but we have to leave out some," he said, adding that those who fail to be appointed as council members will be given posts at the Umno bureaus which will be set up later.

Dr Mahathir also said that he will announce the appointment of state Umno liaison chairmen in two weeks' time.

He also hinted that some menteris besar may not be automatically appointed Umno Supreme Council members this time around, although that has been normal practice in the past.

"Normally yes. Normal means sometimes it is not normal," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the supreme council meeting also discussed several issues raised by delegates at the party general assembly in May, including money politics, lack of Bumiputera participation in new townships and businesses, and the country's independence from foreign influences.

He said the supreme council agreed that Malaysia should continue with its own policies to overcome domestic problems without depending on views from foreign parties.

"We will not be ashamed of our approaches to handle any problem, we will not be colonised by opinions from foreign parties on what constitutes democracy, in handling financial issues or the distribution of wealth among different races," Dr Mahathir said.

He said Umno is aware that some foreign parties are not happy with the success achieved by Malaysia. "We unanimously agreed that we are able to defend our own country and will not bow to anybody."

Dr Mahathir said the supreme council also wanted Umno to be free from money politics, and had come up with suggestions on how it could do this. He, however, declined to elaborate.

Meanwhile, Mustapa said the Umno information chief post is very challenging as he has to revive the party's image.

"I will discuss with supreme council members how to revive the party's image and to carry out the task effectively," he said when met by reporters later.

Mustapa replaces Datuk Dr Yusuf Nor, who is also a supreme council member.

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