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Chua's Cabinet post unaffected

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - There will be no change in Datuk Chua Jui Meng's position as Health Minister as his removal as Kedah MCA chief is a separate matter, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said he understood that Chua was appointed the Kedah chief only because of problems within the MCA in the State, and since the problems had been resolved, Chua could be replaced by a local, Datuk Beh Heng Seong.

"It (Chua's appointment) was a temporary stop-gap measure because of the problem," Dr Mahathir said when asked about Chua's Cabinet position following his removal as Kedah MCA chief.

He said this after opening the Chief Executive Officers' Summit 2001.

On Tuesday, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik dropped Chua, a vice-president, as the state chief, sparking accusations that he was punishing Chua for opposing him on the purchase of Nanyang Press Holdings Bhd.

Dr Ling has denied the accusation and said it was done merely to fulfil the wishes of the local Chinese community.

Dr Mahathir said he himself had earlier been replaced as Umno Kelantan liaison chief but this did not mean he had to resign as Prime Minister.

Asked if there would be a Cabinet reshuffle, he said he did not often reshuffle the Cabinet.

On whether he would be tabling the Budget in Parliament on Oct 19, he said, as he was also Finance Minister, he would be doing so unless there were unforeseen circumstances.