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Umno supreme council to discuss election preparations

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The Umno supreme council meeting on Thursday, which is the first to be chaired by party acting president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, is expected to focus on preparations for the general election and administrative matters, said its secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob today.

Abdullah was appointed Umno acting president last Friday after party president Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad stepped down.

Khalil said there was no specific agenda for the meeting, which will be held exactly a week after the last supreme council meeting chaired by Dr Mahathir.

"Abdullah will surely want to convey his message and aspirations to the supreme council members after taking over as acting president," said Khalil at the Parliament lobby after the tabling of motion of thanks to Dr Mahathir.

Khalil said he believed Abdullah would have a few issues to discuss with the supreme council members. He declined to elaborate.

On whether the issues included the appointment of pro-tem committee members for the 165 Umno divisions and the 25 new ones created following the Election Commission's re-delineation exercise, Khalil said: "It could be one of the issues."

To a question whether the meeting would discuss the need to appoint an acting deputy president to assist Abdullah, Khalil said: "It may be discussed but I am not too sure as we have yet to prepare the agenda for the meeting."

On Saturday, Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said the supreme council would decide whether there was a need to appoint an acting deputy president or leave the post vacant until the party election, scheduled for next year.

Under the Umno constitution, there is no provision for the appointment of an acting deputy president and it is up to the supreme council's discretion. Clause 9.9 of the party constitution only states that when the party president resigns, his deputy will be made the acting president until the next general assembly when a new president is elected.