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Supreme council pledges full support for Dr M

Ashraf Abdullah; Tony Emmanuel; Sufi Yusoff

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - The Umno supreme council tonight expressed its full support for the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and gave its backing to his fight against currency manipulation.

Deputy President Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim told reporters after the council's monthly meeting that the party was fully confident that Dr Mahathir could continue to lead the nation and manage its economy, despite the depreciation of the ringgit.

"We are confident that the Prime Minister can continue to lead the nation and manage the current economic and financial problems," Anwar said.

The council also criticised the attempts by the foreign media and other forces which tried to undermine Dr Mahathir's credibility as Prime Minister and his leadership.

"Umno hopes that all quarters will not entertain attempts to sidetrack our concentration and priority to deal with the current economic problems," Anwar said, adding that the economic problems could be effectively dealt with through unity in the party and Government.

Dr Mahathir, who chaired the meeting, said there was a possibility that the Government would take action to overcome the depreciation of the ringgit.

He said the Government had a strategy to overcome the problem. However, the 1998 Budget proposals would not touch on the strategy.

Asked whether the haze situation had affected relations with Indonesia, Dr Mahathir said it had not.

"Our relations with Indonesia are unaffected."

Meanwhile, Malaysian Trades Union Congress president Zainal Rampak has been accepted as an Umno member, Dr Mahathir said tonight.

He said the party Supreme Council had unanimously decided to accept Zainal's application.

"Zainal was formerly a member of DAP and (Parti Melayu) Semangat 46, and for those who have been members of other (political) parties, their application has to be vetted and approved by the Supreme Council.

"Tonight, the Supreme Council has decided to approve his application," he told reporters after chairing the the council meeting at the Umno headquarters at Menara Dato Onn, here.

Zainal's political involvement began in the 1960s when he joined the Labour Party. In 1990, he joined S46 via Gerakan, Pekemas and DAP.

He contested Parliamentary seats in four general elections on the platform that the labour movement should have its representative in parliament where labour laws are debated and made.

He was elected to the S46 Supreme Council on Aug 31, 1992, but gave up the post on July 9, the following year.

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