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Two Wanita leaders suspended (HL)

Ashraf Abdullah; Sufi Yusoff

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - In a further proof of its resolve to rid the party of money politics, corruption and abuse of power, the Umno Supreme Council today suspended the membership of two former Wanita Exco members.

They are former treasurer, Siti Zainab Abu Bakar, and former secretary of the movement, Senator Habshah Osman, for wrongful transfer of the movement's funds amounting to RM1.8 million.

Announcing the decision, acting party president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, who is also Acting Prime Minister, said Siti Zainab was also relieved of her job as Deputy Primary Industries Minister with immediate effect. However, they remain as MP for Tebrau and Senator respectively.

Soon after the council made the decision and the Press admitted into the meeting room, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, came on the air via a video link-up to congratulate members for taking the decisive action.

Dr Mahathir was speaking from Frazer Nash Research Limited in Surrey, just outside London, which he had earlier visited. The link-up was established to enable Dr Mahathir to hold tele-conferencing with his deputy and other members of the council.

At the time that he came on air, Dr Mahathir was not aware of the council's decision. But when told, the Prime Minister thanked and congratulated the council.

The Prime Minister said: "I thank and congratulate everyone for supporting the decision. Actually I had discussed this with the Deputy Prime Minister and we had agreed on this approach.

"I hope the supreme council will support this and any future decisions on this matter just as the Cabinet had done, although they may affect our friends.

"If we do not act, maybe many of them would think that they would be defended no matter what they do, because we are in power. This is unhealthy for the party and the Government."

The meeting also decided to suspend all party posts of Datuk Sahar Arpan, the Malacca State Assemblyman who is facing three corruption charges in the Malacca High Court.

Two other members of the party, namely branch leader Muhayat Mohamad Yusof and Hamzah Jalil, branch committee member from Kuala Selangor, were sacked for supporting the opposition in last week's Kuala Selangor parliamentary and Permatang state by-elections.

These actions came in the wake of the council's decision last month that the former Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib to cease to function as Umno vice-president and take part in any supreme council activities.

Muhammad is facing two charges of failing to declare foreign currencies worth RM2.4 million when leaving the Brisbane International Airport for New Zealand last Dec 22.

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