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Closed-door meeting at Seri Perdana before trip to Naples

PUTRAJAYA, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad held a closed-door meeting with his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and members of the Umno management committee for about an hour at his official residence here this morning.

The management committee chaired by Abdullah, includes vice-presidents Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob, Wanita chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein.

Abdullah, the first to arrive at Seri Perdana, drove through the main gate about 8.15am, followed shortly by Rafidah and the others.

It was understood that Dr Mahathir's religious adviser Tan Sri Dr Abdul Hamid Othman was also at the residence but did not attend the meeting.

Scores of other leaders, including Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir and Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain, arrived later but were not allowed to enter by policemen on duty at the entrance.

Also there was Barisan Nasional secretary and Alor Star Umno division treasurer Datuk Yaakob Mohammad.

About 9am, Seri Perdana's security personnel posted a notice outside the gate informing a temporary suspension of public entry into the residence complex.

At 9.25am, Abdullah drove out in a grey Proton Perdana bearing registration number WCH 13, signalling that the meeting was over.

Seconds later, reporters and lensmen were informed that Dr Mahathir had left, via another exit, for the Royal Malaysian Air Force base in Subang for an overseas trip.

Some of the Kedah Wanita Umno leaders shed tears and quickly left the area, hoping to meet Dr Mahathir at the RMAF base.

Meanwhile, Dr Mahathir, accompanied by his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, arrived at the Subang air base at 10am.

They were at the terminal, with Abdullah, Hamid and close family members for about 15 minutes before flying off to Dubai, enroute to Naples in Italy for a holiday.

The government jet carrying Dr Mahathir and Dr Siti Hasmah was piloted by Kol Hanif Darimi.

Dr Mahathir is on a 10-day leave and will return on July 3.

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