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Dr Mahathir attends Umno supreme council meeting

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is on a two-month leave, attended the Umno supreme council meeting at Menara Dato' Onn today.

However, he did not chair the three-hour meeting. It was presided over by Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, the acting Prime Minister and acting party president.

Dr Mahathir, who left after the first session, was listed as turut serta (also present).

Abdullah said he met Dr Mahathir in the morning and took the opportunity to inform him of the meeting.

"I said if he had any views or suggestions that he wanted to share, his presence was welcomed. He replied that he would do so if I were to chair the meeting."

Last month, Dr Mahathir chaired the meeting after Abdullah requested him to do so.

The acting Prime Minister said Dr Mahathir took part in discussing the effects of the war in Iraq.

"Many uncertainties have surfaced because of the war. Many things can now happen, like Syria and other countries being attacked by the United States."

Abdullah said the meeting discussed the needs for Malaysia to be prepared and resilient in facing challenges brought about by the war.

"If we are not prepared, the country will be affected. So, what is important is for us to work towards strengthening Umno, Barisan Nasional, the Government and leadership of the country.

"As pillars of the administration, our strength and unity of the people will make the Government stronger. This will help measures to be introduced to help cushion the impact of the war more successfully."

Abdullah said the supreme council also agreed that recognition should be given to Mercy Malaysia for its voluntary work and the Joint Media Team Malaysia for their dedication and sacrifices in reporting on the war from Baghdad and Amman in Jordan.

He said members of both teams operated under very trying conditions which should be appreciated.

On Umno, Abdullah said no decision was made on the 25 new party divisions created by the electoral boundary redelimitation exercise.