

Umno council supports PM's decision

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — The Umno supreme council today threw its support behind the Prime Minister in his decision to ask non-Muslim ministers to withdraw their controversial memorandum.

The councillors also backed Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi on his stand to maintain Article 121(1A) of the Federal Constitution.

Abdullah, who is also Umno president, said in expressing their support, the supreme council members acknowledged the need for the various races to maintain racial unity.

"We have to live in harmony and respect each other, as this will bring about political stability and assist in nation-building and the development of the rakyat," the Prime Minister said after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

The unprecedented submission of a memorandum by the ministers to the Prime Minister had been greeted with mixed feelings, with some condemning the move.

The ministers had presented the memorandum following concerns raised by non-Muslims over the dispute between the widow of M. Moorthy @ Muhammad Abdullah and the Federal Territory Religious Council on whether Moorthy had converted to Islam.

However, they acceded to Abdullah's request that they withdraw the memo.

The Prime Minister had decided that Article 121(1A) of the Federal



CHEERFUL: Abdullah at the Umno supreme council meeting yesterday.

Constitution would not be amended to give the civil court power to hear matters concerning Islam.

The Government, however, was prepared to amend subsidiary legislation to remove any ambiguity over the jurisdictions of the Syariah and civil courts.

The Article stipulates that civil courts have no jurisdiction over matters relating to Islam, which fall under the purview of the Syariah Court.

At the Press conference, Abdullah also commented on the case of the late Nyonya Tahir who was declared a non-Muslim by the Syariah Court in Seremban yesterday.

"The decision was based on facts. This shows that there is justice in the Syariah Court," he said.

Abdullah said by allowing Nyonya Tahir's children to testify, the Syariah Court had cleared misunderstandings that non-Muslims were not allowed to be present and testify to seek justice in the Syariah Court.

Umno is also looking through the draft of the Ninth Malaysia Plan before it is tabled for Cabinet approval.

The supreme council also decided that the party's general assembly this year would only be held after Hari Raya Puasa, which is likely to fall on Oct 24.

Until then, Abdullah said, Umno would continue to concentrate on its membership campaign and clean up its membership rolls to further strengthen the party.