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MPs back Abdullah

Dr M's resignation from party not seen as a major issue

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KUALA LUMPUR: Umno MPs have pledged support to party president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi a day after former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad shocked the nation by quitting from the party.

In a special meeting with Abdullah at the Parliament House here yesterday, the MPs gave a commitment to Abdullah that none of them would heed Dr Mahathir's call for them to also quit Umno.

Sri Gading MP Datuk Mohammad Aziz, who acted as spokesman during the meeting, said all the Umno MPs pledged that they would not leave the party.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz said about 95% of the 79 Umno MPs attended the meeting. Jerlun MP Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, who is Dr Mahathir's son, was one of the few who did not attend the meeting.

"Some of them don't even see it as an issue and they want to move on,"



Membership drive: Umno VP Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam (centre) receiving the applications of 972 new Umno members from Datuk Mohd Yunus Husin (second from left) in Malacca yesterday. — Bernama

Nazri pointed out. "Asked if this meant that Umno's relationship with Dr Mahathir was over, Nazri said: "Ask him (Dr Mahathir). We did not sack him".

He said they had also decided to revive the Umno Parliamentarian Group (UMPG) headed by Kimanis MP Datuk Anifah Aman.

The UMPG acts as the back-

benchers club but will only discuss Umno matters.

Asked if a snap election could be called in the near future, Nazri said there was no reason to do so.

"A snap election will only be called if large scale defections occur," he said. MPs from Sabah, who had been vocal in Parliament last week, demanding attention to

the serious social problems plaguing the state, stressed that Sabah Umno were staying put in the party.

Kalabakan MP Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh said: "Dr Mahathir's resignation is personal against Abdullah. It has nothing to do with Sabah Umno. "If one resigns, how to save the party? We were vocal last week, but our loyalty stays," he said.

Deputy Foreign Minister Datuk Abdul Rahim Bakri said the resignation, although shocking, did not rock the boat too much because "our loyalty is to the party."

Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said said MPs gave full commitment to Abdullah, adding: "This is 2008. It is all about openness in leadership, with bloggers and a more critical public, transparency, accountability and deliverance are demanded," she said.

"He belongs to the past and the party is moving forward," he said.

"We are not yes men. In fact, the previous leadership was more dictatorial. The grassroots were not consulted before important decisions were made," said Zaid.