

Asri and group join Umno

NST 23 NOV 1988

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — Former Hizbul Muslimin (Hamim) president Datuk Haji Asri Muda and 12 former members of the party's supreme council joined Umno today.

In welcoming them at a simple ceremony at Umno headquarters, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said he accepted the group's application on behalf of all Umno members because they were Malays who subscribe to the party's struggle for Islam.

He dismissed the notion of an elaborate plan or evil intention in accepting the group, saying their participation would be for the good of all Malays.

The group's decision to join Umno was based on his invitation to all Malays to join the party for the sake of unity, he said.

"We want to consolidate our energy so we can achieve our objectives of giving Malays and Islam their place in the country," he said.

"Datuk Asri and his group, being politically mature, need not be told of Umno's policy as they were already aware of the situation."

The Hamim leaders who joined Umno are former Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Ishak Lotfi Omar, former deputy president Haji Wan Ismail Wan Ibrahim, former secretary-general Haji Hassan Mohamed, former vice-president Yahya Kassim, women's wing chief Hajjah Salmah Sheikh Hussein and former youth chief Haji Zahari Awang.

The rest are MP for Bachok Haji Zain Abdullah, Sallahuddin Abdullah, Mohamed Junid, Abdul Hamid Salleh, Haji Azhari Hamzah and Haji Ahmad Long.

Datuk Asri handed over the group's application forms to Dr Mahathir, who immediately declared that they had been accepted as Umno members.

The group had quit Hamim enbloc last Thursday, citing "difficulties to continue serving the party" since the vote on a resolution to dissolve the party last month was rejected.

The resolution was discussed and voted on at a special assembly on Oct 23. Sixty-one voted for dissolution and 41 against it. One vote was spoilt.

The former Hamim president had said the resignations were also to make it easier for other members of the supreme council to carry out their work.

Earlier, Datuk Asri admitted that the group's decision to join Umno could "create confusion", bearing in mind that they once bitterly opposed Umno when they were with Pas.

However, Datuk Asri said Umno's "positive approach and wide understanding" in upholding Islam to the highest degree attracted their interest.

Explaining that Hamim was formed to counter the Pas threat, he dismissed claims that their move was due to offers of positions and ranks, saying such status can only be obtained "after you have served faithfully".

"Umno gives us the confidence that it can achieve Islamic objectives. We share the same goals and destiny. That is why we are joining Umno," he said.

Datuk Asri, the former Pas president who quit the party in 1982, said the move to join Umno involved long discussions among themselves and also with Dr Mahathir.

He expected about 1,000 members from the Bachok Hamim division to follow while 2,000 more members in Selangor have already taken application forms.