

04 MAY 1998  
Mahathir-Harris  
UMNO EXPELS HARRIS SALLEH

KUALA LUMPUR, May 4 (Bernama) -- Umno today expelled former Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh as he had joined another party.

Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the decision was made in tonight's meeting of the supreme council, the party's highest policy-making body.

Under the Umno constitution, a member is not allowed to embrace another party.

" We don't allow Umno members to join another party. He (Harris) is now a member of another party and has been expelled," he told a news conference after chairing the supreme council meeting.

Harris, has been appointed Acting President of Bersekutu on March 29 this year while he is still an Umno member in the Ramsay branch of the Labuan division.

He said Harris has been an Umno member since March 29, 1991 and his membership number is 01478797.

Dr Mahathir also said that he would leave for Sabah on Thursday to meet Sabah Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders to decide the next Chief Minister.

Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee's two-year term expires on May 28.

Dr Mahathir said tonight's meeting also discussed the freedom of worship in this country.

He said efforts to convert Muslims to another religion is barred in Malaysia.

" We will ensure that Malaysians are free to embrace any religion of their choice but there should be no attempts to convert Muslims.

" But sometimes this happens due to love affairs but we do not allow Muslims embracing other faiths," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the government would provide places of worship for non-Muslims but if temples or shrines were built in areas without approval from the authorities, they had to be relocated.

Alternative sites would be provided if there is a basis for a place of worship, he said.

He said religious freedom was discussed following the recent clash between Muslims and Hindus over a temple issue in Kampung Rawa in Pulau Pinang.

Dr Mahathir said the relocation need to be carried out orderly so as not to hurt the feelings of the devotees.

Asked whether the meeting discussed the non-governmental organisation (NGO) which provided information to the British press that Malaysia allegedly mass poisoned Indonesian illegal immigrants, Dr Mahathir said the matter was raised but due to lack of evidence to prove in court, the name of the NGO could not be revealed.

Asked whether action would be taken against those who alleged that police might have given the photographs of the alleged mass poisoning, he said his earlier statement was based on the assumption that the photograph was on mass poisoning.

" But the photograph is an old picture of the Semenyih riot and not on mass poisoning," he said.

The meeting also elected Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman, Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam and Datuk Ibrahim Ali as the supreme council's representatives to the Umno Youth delegates' conference.

Representatives to the Wanita delegates' conference are Datuk Mustapa

Mohamed, Datuk Tajol Rosli Ghazali and Tan Sri Abdul Hamid Pawanteh.  
-- BERNAMA  
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