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Umno supreme council nod for PBS to rejoin BN

Ramlan Said; Aionon Mohd

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Umno supreme council has endorsed Parti Bersatu Sabah's application to rejoin Barisan Nasional, party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

He said council members, who discussed the matter at its meeting today, did not raise any objection to the application of the Sabah-based party.

Speaking after chairing the council meeting at Menara Dato' Onn, the Prime Minister said the council's decision would be the stand adopted by the party's representatives when the PBS application is decided upon by the BN supreme council at its next meeting, scheduled after Hari Raya.

PBS' re-entry is almost guaranteed since Umno forms the backbone of BN.

PBS president Datuk Seri Joseph Pairin Kitingan submitted the party's application to re-join BN to Dr Mahathir last month.

It was without any condition.

The party joined BN on June 6, 1986, a year after it was formed but left the coalition a few days before polling day in the 1990 general election.

Asked on the move by PBS Moyog Assemblyman Datuk Clarence Bongkos Malakun who left the party today to join BN component member United Pasok Momogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation, Dr Mahathir said the matter would be discussed by the BN supreme council.

On Malakun's possible motive to join Upko although his party was widely expected to be re-admitted into BN, the Prime Minister, who is BN chairman, said:

"Maybe he likes the other party.

"Like in the past, we had many joining Umno, but there were also those who formed their own parties."

When suggested that it was an attempt to embarrass PBS and derail its application, Dr Mahathir quipped:

"I am not very suspicious like the Press people ... Press people are always suspicious."

Dr Mahathir said he and the party's deputy president also briefed the council on former Mindanao governor Nur Misuari, detained for illegally entering the country.

"Our stand is that the Government is ready to send Misuari out of Malaysia.

"The council will study the latest developments ... to send him home."

On the declaration of Malaysia as an Islamic state, Dr Mahathir said the council was of the opinion that there was no need to debate it as all agreed that Malaysia was an Islamic state.

The Prime Minister said the council deliberated on several international issues, agreeing that many problems arose because of a misinterpretation of Islam.

"There are Malaysian citizens who go overseas not to study the religion, but instead learn how to topple the Government."

Dr Mahathir also said the council today recorded its appreciation of the services of the late Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah.

The party would send a letter, signed by the president, to the late King's eldest son, who is now the Sultan of Selangor, Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah.

Deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the council re-affirmed its decision that the election of branch office bearers would be

held next year.

He said it would take place during the branches' annual general meeting.
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