

# Umno-PAS talks aimed at ensuring peace: PM

By Maria Samad

**P**  
KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Umno has had successful discussions with PAS with the aim of ensuring that there will be no violence in the coming general election.

The Prime Minister said his meeting with PAS leaders early last month was to discuss matters pertaining to Islam and ways to ease the Umno-PAS tension.

"We do not want the tension to escalate and result in riots," he said after chairing an Umno Supreme Council meeting.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said the Supreme Council felt that the meeting with PAS was "sufficient because it has achieved its objective."

PAS president Haji Yusof Rawa, deputy president Ustaz Fadzil Noor and treasurer Syed Ibrahim Abdul Rahman attended the three-hour meeting. Umno Youth president Anwar Ibrahim was also present.

Dr Mahathir said more of such meetings would be held if necessary. He dismissed speculation that the discussions included talks on PAS joining the Barisan Nasional.

"We did not talk about politics. We only discussed ways to defuse tension in view of the elections."

On comments by other Barisan parties that Umno was practising double standards because while it urged others not to talk with PAS it held the dialogue with PAS leaders, Dr Mahathir said:

"They say this because they did not get information about the dialogue."

However, he said "there will always be people who misinterpret our noble intention. There is nothing we can do. If we do good there are others who think we have ulterior motives."

Dr Mahathir reiterated that Umno would continue to oppose PAS because of the methods its leaders used to create confusion.

He said that Ismail, the brother of the late Ibrahim Libya, did not say he was forced to make a confession over TV.

But he changed his story later following threats from PAS leaders, Dr Mahathir said.

On his meeting with the PAS leaders, Dr Mahathir said both parties had agreed that they would not publicise the matter.

Unfortunately, he said, the matter was published by a local newspaper.

He added that subsequently PAS denied that such a meeting took place and Encik Anwar Ibrahim had to put the record straight.

Asked if he believed PAS leaders were sincere in holding dialogues with Umno, Dr Mahathir said: "PAS has many leaders. It is impossible that there is none among them who is sincere. It is the insincere leaders who refuse to accept the fact that a meeting did take place."

Dr Mahathir said PAS was free to challenge Umno in the elections. "But political contests should not give rise to undesirable incidents like what happened during the Padang Terap parliamentary by-election."