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Mahathir-S46

INCREASING SIGNS OF S46 MEMBERS JOINING UMNO, SAYS MAHATHIR

LANGKAWI, Aug 16 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said there are increasing signs that Parti Melayu Semangat 46 members will be joining Umno.

"There has been progress," the Prime Minister and Umno president said when asked on the possibility of S46 members crossing over to Umno following several meetings between him and S46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

In their latest meeting yesterday, they discussed the mechanism of S46 members' entry into Umno, he told reporters after opening the Second World Fujian Convention here.

On speculation that S46 would be dissolved next month with its members joining Umno, Dr Mahathir said he did not know about it but did not rule out that taking place.

He said Tengku Razaleigh did not tell him that S46 would be dissolved, adding that the matter was for S46 members to decide.

"However, we hold to the principle that we cannot accept another Malay party in Barisan Nasional and secondly, if they join Umno they must become Umno members," he said.

"There are no factions in Umno (because) we don't want to create factions, such as an ex-S46 members faction. Factionalism is not healthy for our politics."

Dr Mahathir said Tengku Razaleigh told him that a majority of S46 members were receptive to the proposal to join Umno.

He said those who did not agree to the proposal could be doing so because they felt their positions in the party would be affected.

On the possibility of S46 members joining PAS after their party is dissolved, Dr Mahathir said it could happen as some of the S46 members had never been Umno members and did not hold any sentiment for Umno.

Dr Mahathir stressed once again that Tengku Razaleigh had not been promised any post if the former Umno vice-president returned to the party.

"We did not promise anything. To Umno members themselves we don't give any guarantees, in fact Umno members themselves are sometimes not given posts," he said.

Asked if he felt that the Barisan Nasional would return to power in Kelantan after S46 was dissolved and its members had joined Umno, Dr Mahathir said the chances were bright. -- BERNAMA

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