

20 AUG 1996  
Fadzil-Umno  
PAS REJECTS INVITATION TO JOIN UMNO

KOTA BAHARU, Aug 20 (Bernama) -- PAS today rejected Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's call for its members to join Umno saying that would not strengthen Malay unity.

PAS president Fadzil Noor said the suggestion for the opposition party to dissolve itself and for its members to join Umno en masse should not be made now because Umno itself was facing problems and "not all Umno members are united."

The suggestion was an old one and Dr Mahathir had voiced it several times, he told reporters after a meeting with Kelantan PAS leaders here.

"Foolish parties like (Parti Melayu) Semangat 46 can (join Umno) but we are not a foolish party, we have our principles and vision," Fadzil said.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, called on PAS to follow S46 by dissolving and joining Umno, saying the Islamic party had all this while not fought for Islam.

Fadzil said PAS need not think of joining Umno now because his party was "increasingly strong unlike S46 which is a bankrupt party forced to dissolve and join Umno".

He also described the Prime Minister's suggestion as a slap in the face for S46 leaders who finally had to return to Umno.

On Dr Mahathir's statement that PAS should join the struggle of a bigger group like Umno, Fadzil said: "Umno is not all that big, it's big because it joined the Barisan Nasional."

Asked why PAS felt so strongly against joining Umno, he said his party could not forget Dr Mahathir's statement previously that belittled the party's presence in Barisan Nasional (BN).

"Previously, he (PM) had said that even with PAS in the BN, the Malays were not united...(but now) in Umno too there is no unity," Fadzil said.

PAS joined the BN in 1974 but pulled out in 1987.

Asked if PAS would seek a meeting with Dr Mahathir to find out more about the Prime Minister's suggestion, Fadzil said that would not happen and his party was not giving any thought to the suggestion.

The PAS president also expressed confidence that the party would continue to be in power in Kelantan although it would be faced with a stronger opposition following S46's to join force with Umno. -- BERNAMA

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