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Mahathir-PAS

UMNO WILL SUPPORT PAS IF CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT IN LINE WITH ITS STAND

By: Abdul Rahman Ahmad

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN, May (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Umno will support PAS in the Kelantan state assembly if its proposed constitutional amendment to limit the powers of the ruler is in line with Umno's stand.

The prime minister said PAS itself had supported Umno when the Barisan Nasional government tabled the constitutional amendment in the Dewan Rakyat to limit the powers of the rulers in 1993.

"If it is in line with Umno's stand, we will support it," he told reporters after meeting Malaysian community leaders in Brunei at the residence of the Malaysian High Commissioner, Haji Salim Hashim, here.

"The other states have also amended their constitutions. In fact PAS supported us in the Dewan Rakyat," Dr Mahathir, who is also the Umno President and Barisan Nasional chairman, said.

Yesterday, PAS deputy president Haji Abdul Hadi Awang said the party hoped the BN, especially Umno, would support the PAS-led Kelantan government's proposal to amend the state constitution because PAS had supported Umno when the BN government tabled its constitutional amendment in the Dewan Rakyat.

Abdul Hadi said PAS had also supported the Umno-led Kedah and Terengganu governments in amending their constitutions for the same purpose.

Last Monday, Kelantan state assembly speaker Wan Abdul Rahim Wan Abdullah said five of the seven PAS MPs had voted in support of the federal government's constitutional amendment.

They are Abdul Hadi (Marang), Sanusi Daeng Mariok (Rantau Panjang), Wan Mohamed Jamin Mahmood (Tumpat), Mohamad Sabu (Nilam Puri) and Ibrahim Mahmood (Kuala Krai). Two other PAS members -- Bunyamin Yaakob (Bachok) and Nik Abdullah Arshad (Pengkalan Chepa) -- were absent then.

On the current dispute between PAS and Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46), Dr Mahathir said it was to be expected as the two main parties in the Angkatan Perpaduan Ummah had different ideologies and views.

"Both parties are not compatible...sooner or later there is bound to be a misunderstanding. I am only surprised that it took so long," he said.

Asked about the S46's chances in continuing to collaborate with PAS in the next general election, he said it was difficult for the Umno splinter party to do so in view that their relations had reached the stage of a dispute.

Last Sunday, Kelantan Menteri Besar Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat said S46 had collapsed and no longer existed following its president, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's declaration that he was still with Umno in spirit.

Asked whether the PAS-S46 dispute was caused by the fact that Tengku Razaleigh's statement could be taken as a hint that he wanted to rejoin Umno Dr Mahathir said:

"We have not received (Tengku Razaleigh's application to join Umno)...there is no request whatsoever from him (Tengku Razaleigh). He only said his spirit is still with Umno...what makes him (Nik Aziz) have such an assumption."

Dr Mahathir, who arrived here yesterday for a one-day working visit to Brunei, visited Pulau Pulau Layang-Layang after meeting the Malaysian community leaders.

On his visit to Brunei, Dr Mahathir said it was to enhance bilateral

cooperation to provide investment opportunities to investors from both countries.

"It is just an ordinary visit. We have no problem with Brunei, we only want to foster our relations.

On his talks with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, who is also Brunei Prime Minister, Dr Mahathir said they discussed regional matters like Asean and international issues like Bosnia-Herzegovina and the latest developments in Lebanon.

He said Brunei fully supported Malaysia's role in helping to reconstruct Bosnia.

Dr Mahathir also received a memorandum from representatives of the Malaysian Malay Welfare Association and met leaders of the Malaysian Citizens Association here.

There are 23,800 Malaysians working in Brunei, the highest number of foreign workers in the sultanate.

Malaysia exported RM740 million worth of goods to Brunei last year, mostly foodstuff and construction materials.

In Pulau Layang-Layang, Dr Mahathir was given a briefing by Ekran Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing.

Ting told Bernama later that Dr Mahathir was satisfied with the tourism development on the 6.5ha island which had attracted many tourists, especially divers.

He said that with the Saeaga Airlines service to the island, efforts were being made to woo more tourists who were non-divers.

He also said that the airline was planning daily flights for the Kota Kinabalu-Pulau Layang-Layang-Miri-Mulu sector.

Ting said that besides Malaysians, most of the tourists to the island resort, which was opened last year, were from Hong Kong, Japan and Australia.

The resort had 83 rooms with 80 per cent occupancy and efforts were being made to provide more recreational facilities, he said. The RM50 million project is developed by Woodhouse Sdn Bhd, an Ekran Berhad subsidiary.

Dr Mahathir later left for Labuan to visit the Labuan Financial Centre building. -- BERNAMA

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