

18/10/2000

Debate: All views considered

PETALING JAYA, Tues. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the party will listen to all views about the proposed Pas-Umno debate, including those who want it stopped.

"The problem is that if Umno refused the debate," he said, "Pas would make it an issue and accuse Umno of being frightened."

The Prime Minister said Pas' intention in calling for the debate was aimed at nothing more than making Umno look bad, not because it really wanted a debate.

"If Umno talks about Malay rights (the debate topic), Pas hopes that the Chinese and others will be angry and refuse to support Umno," he said.

"That's their aim, not that they really want to debate. But if we don't accept their challenge, it appears that we are scared," he told reporters after opening a conference on the K-economy.

He was asked to comment on views that the debate would do more harm than good, and would not serve any purpose. These views came from Umno leaders as well as those from Pas.

If confirmed, the one-on-one debate is between Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein and his Pas counterpart Mahfuz Omar.

Dr Mahathir had earlier given his approval.

No date has been set for the debate but it is supposed to be held before the fasting month next month.

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