

PM: Malay unity doesn't mean severing ties with other races

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malay unity advocated by Umno did not mean that co-operation and relations with other races would be severed.

The call for Malays to unite was also not intended to make enemies or to oppose the non-Malays, he added.

"This unity is only to defend Malay rights as provided for under the Constitution, namely the special privileges accorded to the community, Islam as the official religion, Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and the Rulers as constitutional monarchs."

Replying to Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong), the Prime Minister said Malay unity was only needed when the four issues were challenged.

"These challenges affect the rights of all Malays, be they from Umno, Pas or others. Therefore, politically, defending them will not benefit Umno alone but all Malays, so everyone should be involved."

Pre-conditions imposed by Pas had affected the Umno-initiated unity talks with the party.

They are allowing its official organ *Harakah* to be published twice weekly, restoring Petronas royalty payments to Terengganu and dropping any move prohibiting the use of the word "Islam" in organisations, including political parties.

The third condition was "fulfilled" technically when the Conference of Rulers at its recent meeting decided that organisations be allowed to use the word "Islam" in their names but cautioned against any form of abuse.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said national unity would not be achieved without Pas' participation as it meant the exclusion of Malays in the party.

"Pas will not cease to exist just because the Malays in the party join Umno in defending Malay rights. In other words, Pas can continue to oppose Umno."

Taking a leaf from the country's history, Dr

Mahathir said the effectiveness of Malay unity was demonstrated during the fight against the Malayan Union and for independence.

"At that time, almost all Malays were united under Umno and the British had to bow to its demands. If there was disunity then like what we are seeing now, surely the British would not entertain the demands, and privileges accorded to the community might not be obtained.

"But because Umno represented almost all Malays, the demands were met."

Dr Mahathir said it was evident the unity shown by the Malays then had not affected national unity.

He said the Chinese and Indians, together with the Malays, joined in the fight to achieve independence besides accepting the special privileges for Malays as enshrined under the Constitution.

Without Pas' participation in the talks, Dr Mahathir said it would lead to the perception that the party did not agree on the issue of protecting Malay rights, Islam as the official religion, Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and the Sultans as Rulers of the Malay States.

"If Pas is deemed willing to forego these four matters and Keadilan (Parti Keadilan Nasional) denies that it is a Malay party, then it will be difficult for Umno to defend the rights successfully."

Dr Mahathir said it was because of this that the Malays in Umno and Pas should discard party sentiments and unite in defending their rights that were being challenged.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that Umno did not reject national unity, arguing that defending Malay rights would not affect it.

"On the contrary, it will strengthen national unity that has been achieved. For example, recently all Malaysians regardless of party or race were united in opposing rogue currency traders."