

Dr M hopes Pas will agree to hold talks with Umno

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JITRA, Sun. — Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad hoped Pas president Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor would agree to a meeting between the two parties after his return from Mecca.

“I hope he (Fadzil) will get divine inspiration while he is performing the haj in Mecca.

“I hope he will agree to a meeting between Umno and Pas after he returns from Mecca,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was important for the meeting to take place, especially for the Malays who were divided.

Dr Mahathir said he hoped the meeting would take place although Pas was adamant of having certain pre-conditions met.

He said while it was one thing to have differences, such differences should not hinder the two Malay-based political parties from sitting down and working out solutions.

The Prime Minister said this in his speech at the joint opening of annual meetings of Umno branches at Dewan Jitra this afternoon.

Also present was Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain.

A scheduled meeting between Umno and Pas on Feb 19 was postponed by Pas until a more conducive environment for the talks could be achieved.

Pas also set certain pre-conditions to be fulfilled by Umno.

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Fadzil had left for Mecca on Feb 25 and will only be back on March 15.

Dr Mahathir also urged Umno grassroots leaders to explain the party's struggles to the Malays and win their support.

He said leaders at the branch level had to take the lead in making the Malays realise that it was Umno which championed the interests of the Malays in the country.

Pas on the other hand, he said, was an Umno splinter party formed by a group of ulamas in Umno whose main interest then was to seek for positions and enjoy the benefits given to *wakil rakyat*.

“The branch leaders and leaders of the Youth and Wanita wings should go down and explain why Umno was set up and also its struggles.

“They must win support the support of the Malays and make Umno strong in order to protect Malay interests,” he said.

Dr Mahathir said the Malays had proven they could be united when they fought against the Malayan Union.

“The Malays were strong then and the British had no choice but to acknowledge Umno as a Malay political party and give its leaders due respect.”