

# 'UM's Pusat Asasi Sains should stay open

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JITRA, Thurs. — Universiti Malaya's Pusat Asasi Sains should remain open, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

This was the Prime Minister's response to a question by reporters on the university's decision to close the centre in April which has drawn protests from the university's lecturers and former students.

The issue was discussed at the Umno supreme council meeting in Malacca on Monday.

Universiti Malaya Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Anuar Zaini was reported to have said last week that he would stick to the decision to shut down the centre despite calls, including that from Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, to do otherwise.

The centre was established in 1977 to enhance the achievement of Bumiputera students in science at the pre-university level.

Yesterday, Umno Youth said it would submit a memorandum against the university's decision.

When asked to comment on the matter at a Hari Raya gathering of the Umno Kubang Pasu here today, the Prime Minister said:

"I have advised that the centre remain open."

At the gathering too, Dr Mahathir said Umno would not stand in the way if Pas chose to rejoin the Barisan Nasional, but he did not think that

its leaders and members would want to dissolve the party to do so.

The Prime Minister said this in response to a question on whether Umno would extend a similar offer to Pas as the MIC did when inviting the All Malaysian Indian Progressive Front to rejoin it.

A decision to rejoin the BN would be entirely up to Pas, while its acceptance into the BN fold would depend on whether all component parties agreed.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president, said Umno would not reject any Pas member seeking to join the party.

"If Pas members want to join Umno, we will accept them... There have been Pas members who joined Umno such as former Pas president the late Datuk Asri Muda.

"We (Umno) plan to hold a *mu-zakarah* (discussion) with them (Pas), we want to hear their views... We cannot talk before we meet (for the proposed Malay unity talk)," he said after attending a Hari Raya gathering organised by the Kubang Pasu Umno Youth at Sekolah Menengah Jitra.

Dr Mahathir said efforts to reunite a single race in the country should not be misconstrued as an attempt to oppose another.

He said the sole aim of the proposed unity talks between Umno and Pas was to unite the Malays and a similar effort taken by the MIC with IPF was also to enhance unity.

"All we want is to strengthen relations and do away with feelings of animosity," he said.