

# Umno still wants to meet PAS, says PM

STAR

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KUALA LUMPUR: Umno still wants to meet PAS to talk about anything "under the sun," including all the pre-conditions forwarded by the opposition party.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said if PAS was agreeable to the meeting, the party could bring any matter to the discussion table.

Expressing regret that the proposed unity talks scheduled for last Monday did not take place because of PAS' pre-conditions, Dr Mahathir said:

"In the first place, the pre-conditions set by PAS are best forwarded to the Government as they are not under Umno's

jurisdiction to fulfil.

"But Umno can influence, so we should meet to discuss them. We are not saying no, but we want to discuss first."

He said if all PAS pre-conditions were accepted beforehand, then there was no more need for the two parties to meet.

Speaking after chairing an Umno supreme council meeting yesterday, Dr Mahathir said the proposed talks were not about a show of strength between the two parties nor about neutralising opposition parties.

"Umno has no intention of merging with PAS to strengthen Malay unity so that we can go against other races. Even if these talks go on, the interest of other races

will still be protected.

"We also do not want to neutralise opposition parties because in a democracy, opposition parties are needed to criticise the Government so that the Government will always be careful," he said.

Umno, he said, was interested in meeting PAS to address various problems relating to Malay unity and still believed that the talks would be good for the country.

He said Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob had been directed to get in touch with his PAS counterpart to further discuss the possibility of getting the proposed talk on course.

Dr Mahathir said Umno was very sincere in wanting to meet PAS and this was reflect-

ed by its soft stand on PAS' previous condition that the scope of the proposed talks which were supposed to be based on Malay unity be widened to include national integration.

Despite that, he said PAS continued to issue other pre-conditions — that the talks be opened to discussion on alleged flaws in the judiciary and alleged mismanagement by the Government — which Umno had also agreed to.

He said the last pre-conditions set by PAS — that its official organ *Harakah* be allowed to be printed eight times a month instead of the current twice monthly and the reinstatement of oil royalty to Terengganu — were out of Umno's jurisdiction.