

Dr M: Umno won't stop PAS from joining BN

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JITRA: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Umno will not stand in the way of PAS if the opposition party wants to join the Barisan Nasional coalition.

"If PAS wants to join BN, it is up to the other BN component parties to decide. Umno will not stand in the way," he told reporters when asked about the matter after he attended a Hari Raya gathering organised by the Kubang Pasu Umno Youth here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said his party was willing to accept any party, including PAS, into the coalition.

When asked, in the context of the proposed Umno-PAS talks on Malay unity, whether PAS would disband and have its members join Umno, Dr Mahathir said:

"We are open. Nevertheless, I do not think PAS will disband to join Umno.

"We are willing if anyone (any party) has the intention to join Umno. We will definitely accept it.

"All this while, many PAS members have joined Umno. Umno has never objected to applications from PAS members and their leaders to join."

Dr Mahathir said that Umno was prepared to hold discussions with PAS to hear its views on the matter.

On Universiti Malaya's decision to close its science matriculation centre, Dr Mahathir said he had advised the university to allow the centre to remain open.

In an immediate reaction to Dr Mahathir's views on the prospect of PAS rejoining Barisan, PAS Youth chief Mahfuz Omar said the party would not consider the matter.

"Our president (Datuk Fadzil Noor) has said that PAS is comfortable being in the opposition (in Parliament) until the next elections," he said.