

# Unity talks to begin on Feb 19

SUN 11.2.2001

• No conditions whatsoever, says Dr M • PAS to bring up oil royalty issue

## Keadilan admitted it is not a Malay-based party, says Mahathir

from PAGE ONE

He said matters governing national unity must include the oil royalty issue.

"In the first place, this matter should not have been politicised or made into a political tool to avenge Umno's loss of Terengganu," he said.

Mahathir, elaborating on why Keadilan was rejected, said the party remains barred although the scope of the talks had widened.

This is because Keadilan had rejected an earlier invitation, claiming the party to be a multiracial one and not a Malay-based party, he said.

"They are not a Malay-based party. We just want to discuss with PAS. It (Keadilan) has admitted that it is not a Malay-based party," he said.

Mahathir said Keadilan had rejected Umno's invitation not based on the agenda but based on the fact that it is not a Malay-based party.

Asked if Keadilan wants to join the discussion now that the topic will cover all issues, he said: "They have nothing to do with it. They have to first announce that they are now a Malay-based party, then only we may consider."

He then read out part of a letter sent by Keadilan to him, rejecting the invitation to join the talks. The letter among others said "Keadilan stresses that it is a multi-racial party".

Asked to comment on this, Keadilan president Datin Seri

Wan Azizah Ismail told *The Sun* the party welcomes Umno's move to expand the scope of the unity talks to include national matters as well.

She said the party had no regrets that Keadilan was not invited because in her letter to Mahathir, the Alternative Front had invited Umno for similar talks.

"In fact, I think I was misquoted in the letter read out by the prime minister because I had stated Keadilan is a Malay-based multi-racial party and we only rejected (the invitation) because it was confined then to Malay unity."

She said they will not appeal to Umno to be included in the talks.

On details of the Umno-PAS talks, Mahathir said Umno has agreed to PAS's proposal for a six-member team from each party, to be headed by both party presidents.

"The six from Umno will include the party president while the rest will be decided by the party's political bureau.

"PAS will be headed by its president, so we have to send someone of the same rank," he said.

Mahathir, however said, the venue of the meeting is yet to be decided.

Asked whether there will be a follow-up meeting after the Feb 19 meeting, he said: "We don't know. What we have agreed on is for the meeting to be held."

By **Ferida Abdul Kudhus**  
and **Hazatul Syima**  
newsdesk@thesundaily.com

**KUALA LUMPUR, Sat:** The much debated unity talks between Umno and PAS will start on Feb 19 and will cover any issue relating to Malay unity, but Keadilan is firmly barred from participating.

Keadilan had earlier rejected the talks, as the party wanted it to include the issue of national unity as well.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Umno is prepared to discuss and talk on "whatever issues" that PAS wants to raise at the meeting.

## IPF members to decide party's fate today: Page 5

"Anything that has got to do with Malay unity," Mahathir said after chairing a party supreme council meeting here today.

"National unity is also related with Malay unity," he said, adding that there were no conditions "whatsoever" for the meeting.

Asked whether the issue of Terengganu's oil royalty will be included in the meeting, he replied: "It's an open discussion without conditions. We received in writing that there are no conditions."

PAS president Datuk Fadzil Noor in an immediate reaction told *The Sun* that the party will raise the oil royalty issue at the meeting.

turn to PAGE 4