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Dr M: Pas should state clearly whether it wants to meet or not

KUALA LIPIS, Thurs. - Pas should state very clearly whether or not it wants to participate in the proposed Malay unity talks, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"If Pas does not want to meet, say so and don't give other reasons. Say that it is not concerned about Malay rights but it is giving priority to national interest, and it is because of this that it does not want to meet," Dr Mahathir said at a Press conference.

He earlier had a dialogue with leaders and members of the Lipis and Raub Umno divisions at the Umno Lipis building here.

Dr Mahathir said Umno was not trying to "persuade" Pas but was just stating its intention to meet because it felt it was important for the talks to be held for the benefit of the Malays.

He said this when asked to comment on a call from Umno Youth that the party stop its overtures to get Pas to agree on the Malay unity talks as the latter was not sincere.

Elaborating, Dr Mahathir said the talks were not for Malays in Umno or Pas only but for the community as a whole. He gave an example on this matter.

"(Let's say) we do not want any preferential treatment for the Malays like Malay students entering universities should be based on merit ... we can do this, and no one should complain (later).

"Why ask only Umno to defend Malay rights? They (Pas) enjoy the benefits but are not prepared to defend them, leaving the responsibility only to Umno ... this is not the way."

Dr Mahathir said Umno felt the Malays should have a common stand in protecting their rights, and if they were not united in facing the challenges, they would lose out.

He said Umno should not be seen as weak following its overtures, even when it agrees to meet after Pas place certain items on the agenda.

Dr Mahathir also said that Pas was trying to portray the Government as anti-Chinese, judging from statements some of its leaders make at its ceramah recently.

Asked whether there was a time frame for the waiting period before the talks take place, Dr Mahathir said it would continue with its efforts as the party was of the opinion that Malay rights enshrined under the constitution should be protected by all Malays.

On a newspaper report that the Employees' Provident Fund has bought some of the unsubscribed shares of Time.com, Dr Mahathir said he was leaving the matter to the wisdom of the fund.

"I think EPF is smart ... if they are stupid, we will not have the biggest pension fund in the world with billions of ringgit. If it is stupid, it will not have this amount of money.

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