

15/01/2001

Dr Mahathir: Differences won't hinder unity talks

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ALOR STAR, Sun. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today he did not expect differences of opinion to hinder the proposed Malay unity talks between Umno and Pas.

The Prime Minister said the climate for the proposed talks between the two Malay-based parties was good.

He said there were bound to be differences of opinion on matters to be discussed, but this was common in any discussion.

"This is common... so long as we can sit down and talk to each other," he said at the Sultan Abdul Halim Airport in Kepala Batas, near here, before leaving for Kuala Lumpur.

He and his wife, Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, were here to attend an investiture ceremony held in conjunction with the Sultan of Kedah's 73rd birthday at Istana Anak Bukit.

Dr Mahathir said Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Pas secretary-general Nasharuddin Mat Isa would discuss the format and logistics of the talks.

Last night, Pas president Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor reiterated there was a consensus among Pas leaders that the party should participate in the talks.

"We had a meeting and everyone, including Youth chief (Mahfuz Omar) was allowed to speak and voice their opinions.

"We agreed in principle that we should participate in the proposed talks and the scope should be widened," Fadzil told a Press conference after a ceramah at Kampung Gajah Mati.

Asked about Pas Youth's stand, which was seen opposing the talks, Fadzil said: "This is not a problem because the youth wing's role is to check and balance."

Fadzil said to avoid misunderstanding among members on why Pas agreed to the Umno proposed talks, the party would explain it at its ceramah.

Dr Mahathir on Friday said Umno did not reject Fadzil's idea that the talks should be on national unity and not just on Malays as the country was made up of various races.

However, Dr Mahathir feels that the talks should now concentrate on Malay unity.

He said Umno wanted to discuss Malay unity first because disunity among Malays was glaring and could lead to various problems.

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