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Mahathir-Unity

MAHATHIR SAYS 50 PCT CHANCE OF UMNO-PAS TALKS TAKING PLACE

BUKIT KAYU HITAM, March 5 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today there was a 50 percent chance of the proposed Umno-PAS talks on Malay unity taking place.

"We can only take the initiative, the rest we leave it to circumstances," the Prime Minister and Umno president said in reply to a question at a press conference after launching the Kota Perdana-Asean Industrial Metropolis 2010 here.

Dr Mahathir said Umno wished to discuss matters related to Malay unity in the meeting with PAS as Malay unity was important in ensuring national unity.

PAS has accepted Umno's invitation to a meeting between the leaders of the two parties but set certain pre-conditions to be fulfilled by Umno.

On PAS' claim that the Malays were not disunited but have only shifted their support from Umno to opposition parties, Dr Mahathir said the problem now was that a major split was taking place in the community.

"If the shift is towards somebody who is not the enemy, it's all right. But the Malays are now deeply split," he said.

Asked how the split could be avoided considering that the supporters of Umno and PAS had different ideologies, he said: "Political leanings bound to differ. But when Malay interests are affected, they (PAS) must discuss together with us," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Umno was not out to trap PAS by inviting the opposition party to a meeting as claimed by certain people.

On another matter, the Prime Minister said the Government would only take stern action against people promoting street demonstrations to topple the Government if they was sufficient evidence.

Asked if the current trend to file multi-million ringgit defamation suits against newspapers was healthy or unhealthy, he said it could be both.

"If the newspapers publish reports that are not correct and are sued for low amounts, they can settle the suits and come out with incorrect reports again.

"But it is also not appropriate if the suits are for very high amounts," he said.

-- BERNAMA

JM/MAN SK