

03 JAN 2001

Unity-Abdullah

MEETING PROPOSED AMONG UMNO, PAS AND KEADILAN PRESIDENTS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 3 (Bernama) -- The Umno Management Committee meeting today resolved to propose to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that a meeting be held among the Umno, PAS and Keadilan presidents to discuss Malay unity.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Umno Deputy President Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the committee's proposal was that Dr Mahathir as Umno President meet with PAS President Datuk Fadzil Noor and Keadilan President Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

He said it would be up to the leaders of the main Malay parties in this country to decide whether delegations from their respective parties should join the discussions.

The Deputy Prime Minister said the proposal was among several matters agreed to at the two-hour meeting.

These matters would be conveyed to the Prime Minister on his return from his Myanmar visit, he said.

Dr Mahathir left for Myanmar this morning for a brief working visit.

"Once the Prime Minister gives his consent, we propose that Umno Secretary General Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob contact the secretaries-general of the other two parties to explain to them the format, venue and time for the meeting," Abdullah said.

Replying to a question, he said the committee did not see the need for a mediator to be present at the meeting.

"It will be better for these leaders to face each other and hold heart to heart talks...there is no need for a mediator," he said.

It would be up to the leaders to convey whatever proposals or decisions arrived at the meeting to the grassroots of their respective parties, Abdullah said.

He also said Umno did not lay down any condition for the meeting.

Commenting on the claim by certain individuals that the meeting would be a waste of time and would only benefit Umno, Abdullah said the meeting would actually benefit the Malays as a whole.

This was because Malay unity had always been the basis of national unity, he said.

"We cannot see national unity existing if Malays remain divided," Abdullah said.

The leaders of Umno, PAS and Keadilan had in fact agreed in principle to attend a meeting to discuss and restore Malay unity.

Abdullah also said that the management committee would propose that Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen be appointed Chairman of the Umno Disciplinary Board which had been set up following amendments to the party constitution in November last year.

He said the committee had also identified seven others for membership of the board but he did not name them.

"The committee will propose to the Supreme Council that membership of the Board be not limited to just eight."

He also said people identified for membership of the Board did not hold key posts in Umno.

They were suitable candidates for membership of the board as they were veterans who understood political bureaucracy and were well versed in the Umno Constitution, he said.

"I am confident they will be able to discharge their responsibilities well," Abdullah said.

Appointment letters would be sent out after the Supreme Council meeting on Jan 12, he added.

Touching on another matter, the Umno Deputy President said divisions could form new branches.

Members could pay their subscriptions by Jan 31 as there had been complaints that they were unable to settle the payment by the end of last year, he said.

-- BERNAMA

NZ MAM AR AHH AAM