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National unity should be basis for talks, says Fadzil Noor

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Pas president Datuk Fadzil Mohd Noor said national unity and not Malay rights, Islam, the national language or the position of Malay rulers should be the basis for the proposed Umno-Pas unity talks.

However, he said, Pas was willing to discuss these four matters at its Central Working Committee meeting scheduled Sunday as they had been proposed by Umno.

"All the four matters are enshrined in the Federal Constitution.

"We do not view any of the four matters as the cause for any disunity among Malays," he said, adding that Pas respected the Constitution.

If any discussion was to take place, issues affecting national unity should be discussed, he added.

Fadzil, who returned from performing the Haj yesterday, said this when asked to comment on the call by Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last week for both Malay-based parties to stand together to protect the Malay special rights, Islam as the official religion, Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and the position of the Malay Rulers.

Dr Mahathir said there was a need for both parties to discuss these matters to enhance co-operation and for the Malays to stand united on issues concerning them.

Fadzil said he had been briefly informed on the developments of the proposed unity talks by party secretary-general Nasharuddin Mat Isa.

"I do not know the agenda of Sunday's meeting yet but I believe all these (development on unity talks) will be raised at the meeting," he said.

"We have faith in our technical team to continue discussion at the technical committee level with its Umno counterpart."

Fadzil said Pas was still awaiting Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaacob's proposal for the third technical committee meeting.

The proposed unity talks was supposed to take place on Feb 19, but the Pas CWC postponed it at the eleventh hour and set several pre-conditions.

Pas has insisted that these pre-conditions be met first before the unity talks can take place. The pre-conditions are that the petroleum royalty to the Terengganu Government be restored, its organ Harakah be allowed to be published twice weekly instead of twice monthly at present and efforts to withdraw the ban of the use of the word Islam in the name of political parties.

The Umno-Pas technical committee has met twice.

In Kuala Terengganu, Pas deputy president Abdul Hadi Awang denied that an extremist group within its fold had put pressure on the party to stop the realisation of the proposed talks on Malay unity.

Abdul Hadi said Pas had always made decisions on party matters through collective agreement and not by an individual or group within the party.

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