

25 FEB 2001

Abdullah-Talks

TECHNICAL COMMITTEES NO MANDATE TO RESOLVE PAS'S CONDITIONS

By: Abdul Muin Abd Majid

CAIRO, Feb 25 (Bernama) -- The conditions set by PAS for talks with Umno cannot be resolved by the technical committees of both parties, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

He said this was because these committees did not have the mandate to do so.

"Prime Minister (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) has said that we are willing to talk, no need to set conditions.

"Otherwise, it will only be discussions at the secretary-general level of both parties. And that is not the intention," he told the Malaysian press after a get-together with some 1,000 Malaysian students in Egypt on Saturday's night.

Abdullah is here to attend the 3rd Summit of D-8 countries which began Sunday.

The question on the Umno-PAS talks was raised during the question and answer session after Abdullah's speech at the get-together which was held at the Abbasiah Malaysian Hostel.

He said Umno and PAS naturally had different approaches to develop the Muslim society but that should not be the cause for them to fight among themselves.

"All Muslims want a greater place for Islam in our country. But Umno's ways of achieve this are different. PAS' ways are also different. But, this should not cause us to fight each other," he said.

PAS wants, among others, its official organ Harakah be allowed to be published twice a week as before and the oil royalty restored to Terengganu as conditions for talks with Umno.

The opposition party also wants Umno's proposal to drop the word "Islam" from the party's name (Parti Islam Se-Malaysia) be rejected.

Abdullah also fielded several questions from the students on the special payment in Terengganu and financing education.

He said the Federal Government would continue to channel the special payment in the interest of the people of Terengganu although others questioned it.

"I have been entrusted to ensure that every sen of the money will reach the people of Terengganu," he said.

In his speech, Abdullah said the development taking place in Malaysia was in accordance with Islam as they were in the interest and for the progress of the people.

He said the government's policies and approaches in bringing progress to the Malays were done without robbing other communities of their rights.

--BERNAMA

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