

27 MAR 2001

Talks-Postponement

UMNO-PAS JOINT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE MEETING POSTPONED INDEFINITELY

KUALA LUMPUR, March 27 (Bernama) -- The Umno-PAS technical committee meeting slated for today to discuss preparations for the inter-party talks on Malay unity was postponed indefinitely, Umno secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said.

PAS asked for the postponement in a letter sent via facsimile by its secretary-general Nasharuddin Mat Isa to Umno executive secretary Tengku Datuk Adnan Mansor at 1.12pm today, Khalil told Bernama and RTM here.

This was to be the third technical committee meeting.

Khalil, who is Information Minister, said PAS wanted the meeting postponed as some of its technical committee members could not attend today's meeting.

"Umno will wait for PAS to fix a new date for the meeting," he said.

Khalil said that prior to this Umno did not receive any formal letter from PAS on today's meeting.

"I only came to know about it from reporters that such a meeting will take place at 3.30pm today," he said.

PAS had reportedly agreed that the technical committees of both parties meet today but still insisted on Umno meeting the three pre-conditions namely reinstatement of oil royalty to Terengganu, bi-weekly publication of Harakah, its official organ, and that Umno drop the plan to disallow organisations and political parties from using the word Islam for their names.

PAS called off the Malay unity talks on the eve of the scheduled date, Feb 19 saying there should be a conducive atmosphere first before the talks could start and that there were still some technical loose ends.

Khalil said the technical committee meeting could have been held without having to raise the question of full turnout of the members as the meeting could still proceed even if only it was between the parties' secretaries general.

This problem could be resolved by determining the quorum for the meeting, say three of the six committee members and it need not be that all six must attend, Khalil said.

Umno had even agreed to PAS' request to add two more members on its technical committee, making it six altogether and yet this appeared to have caused difficulty in convening a meeting, he said.

Asked whether PAS genuinely wanted to hold the proposed Malay unity talks with Umno, Khalil said Umno members sincerely wanted to hold such meeting.

"Through this meeting several problems could be resolved.

"Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had repeatedly said that the proposed meeting is crucial and Umno's stand has not changed," said Khalil.

Meanwhile, PAS president Datuk Fadzil Noor when approached by reporters at Parliament House lobby said today's Umno-PAS technical committee meeting was deferred as one of the members of the PAS committee was abroad.

Fadzil declined to reveal the identity of that individual.

"I too have no idea as how long the meeting would be postponed," he said when asked about the latest development relating to the proposed Umno-PAS unity talks.

Asked whether PAS would find a substitute committee member, he replied: "This we shall have to ask the secretary-general."

-- BERNAMA
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