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Umno leaders support PM's call on Malay unity talks

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Umno leaders have expressed support for the call yesterday by party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for Pas to stand together with Umno to protect Malay rights, Islam as the official religion, Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and the position of the Malay Rulers.

They called on Pas to set aside political differences and ideology to sit with Umno and discuss issues affecting Malay unity.

In Muar, Johor Umno liaison committee chairman and Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said today Dr Mahathir's frank and sincere explanation should remove any doubt, misunderstanding and suspicion held by Pas on the talks.

"If Pas continues to thwart or reject Umno's initiative to have the talks, this is tantamount to the party not being interested in Malay unity to protect their rights," he added.

Yesterday, Dr Mahathir called for a Press conference at his office in Putrajaya to specifically explain Umno's stand on the Malay unity talks.

He said that the talks with Pas was to establish a common ground to, among others, protect Malay rights.

Dr Mahathir said that certain quarters had been making attempts to challenge the special position of the Malays possibly because they perceived the Malays to be politically split and lacking a common stand.

Owing to this, he said he hoped Umno and Pas would be able to stand together to defend their rights.

Ghani said Johor Umno supported the party's stand on the Malay unity talks as explained by Dr Mahathir.

He said Johor Umno would go all out to explain to its members during the party elections in the State on the importance of holding the proposed talk.

He said it was important that the party's stand be fully understood by all members.

Speaking to reporters after attending the Majlis Korban Aidiladha organised by Umno Ledang division at Parit Kesan near Bukit Gambir, Ghani said Dr Mahathir had made it clear that Malays, irrespective of their political affiliations and ideologies, should set aside their political difference and collectively defend Malay rights.

In Port Dickson, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad said it was the responsibility of all Malay-based groups including Opposition parties to help uphold the special rights of Malays in the country.

He said that Dr Mahathir's call for a united front to protect Malay rights was made in good faith and added that Pas should now understand the necessity of the Malay unity talks.

He said Pas and other political parties which stood for the Malays should stand up to any challenge against the special rights of Malays and Muslims in the country being brought with the perception that Malays are politically split and lack a common stand.

Speaking to reporters after visiting several new development spots here today Isa said: "The unity talks should therefore be treated as being without political intention but viewed in a social context for the good of the race.

Isa said he hoped the Opposition parties will see the true intention of Dr Mahathir's call to establish a united front to protect Malay rights.

In Malacca, Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam expressed the hope that Pas would be able to set aside its individual and political interests to meet with Umno leaders.

He said it is wise that Pas accepts Dr Mahathir's proposal to discuss the four issues.

"So let Umno and Pas meet to discuss these four issues and Pas should set aside any other requirement or conditions which do not fall under this topic," he said.

Mohd Ali who is also the Chief Minister pointed out that although the MCA and DAP differ in their political ideology, they seemed united when matters concerning Chinese interests are concerned.

Therefore, he said Pas should be like the DAP and they should be willing to sit down and discuss with Umno leaders on the four issues.

Pas is setting certain conditions for the talks.

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