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Umno, Pas panels meet on March 27

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The Umno and Pas technical committees will meet for the third time on March 27 to lay the groundwork for the proposed Malay unity talks.

Pas president Datuk Fadzil Noor said today the party's central working committee had given the go-ahead for its technical committee, headed by secretary-general Nasharuddin Mat Isa, to continue discussions with Umno.

However, he said there was no change to the three pre-conditions set by Pas which had to be fulfilled by Umno before the talks could take place. The party had no plans to impose new conditions.

The talks were originally set for Feb 19 but Pas postponed them at the eleventh hour, demanding that Umno fulfill the three conditions.

Speaking to reporters after the party's central working committee meeting at its headquarters in Taman Melewar, Gombak, Fadzil said the technical committee would meet in Kuala Lumpur.

"Umno has forwarded a few dates and we agreed to meet on the 27th."

Fadzil hoped Pas would be able to convince Umno to accept the conditions - the restoration of petroleum royalties to the Terengganu Government, permission for its official organ Harakah to appear twice weekly and that it be allowed to use the word "Islam" in its name.

On the agenda outlined by Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Fadzil said Pas was willing to discuss them but Umno had to accept the pre-conditions first.

Asked to comment on views that Pas was prolonging the matter to gain political mileage and publicity, he said it was up to Umno to resolve the impasse.

To a suggestion that Pas now considered the talks as cancelled because Umno was not prepared to meet its demands, he said there was still hope.

Fadzil contended that Umno could easily meet the conditions as it was the main party in the Government.

On the Rulers Council which is expected to make a decision on the use of the word "Islam" in organisations at its meeting next week, Fadzil said Pas would never drop the word from its name and would oppose any move compelling the party to do so. He claimed Umno was trying to drag the Rulers and the National Fatwa Council into politics.

Meanwhile, Nasharuddin said the party's four-member technical committee had roped in two new members.

They are Kuala Terengganu MP Dr Syed Azman Syed Ahmad Nawawi and Pas research centre director Dr Zulkifli Ahmad.

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