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UUM don was the first to suggest unity talks

THE idea for unity talks was first mooted by Universiti Utara Malaysia's deputy vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Ahmad Fauzi Basri in December last year.

He suggested that Umno, Pas and Parti Keadilan Nasional should "sit down and work things out" to foster Malay unity.

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, speaking in Alor Star a day after chairing the party's supreme council meeting on Dec 23 last year, when asked whether Umno would initiate the talks said it depended on the situation. Both parties agreed to conduct unity talks on Feb 19.

Technical committees, with Umno's headed by the party's secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Pas by its secretary-general Nasharudin Mat Isa, were established to discuss logistics and other related matters pertaining to the talks. They met twice, on Feb 8 and Feb 16.

On Feb 15, Nasharudin was quoted requesting that four issues - relating to the judiciary, federalism, religion and the economy - be highlighted during the talks.

Three days later, Pas' Central Working Committee decided to postpone the meeting. The party also made some demands to create a "conducive atmosphere" for the talks to occur.

The two main pre-conditions are restoring permission for Pas party organ, Harakah, to be published twice weekly from the current two times a month, and to return Terengganu petroleum royalty payments to the State Government.

Dr Mahathir, speaking after chairing the party's supreme council meeting on Feb 22, reiterated the council's desire that the talks be held.

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