

04 JAN 2001  
Unity-Reaction  
VARIOUS GROUPS SUPPORT TALKS TO UNITE MALAYS

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 4 (Bernama) -- Leaders of various Malay political organisations and political leaders today expressed full support for Umno's efforts to initiate talks on Malay unity.

They hoped that the talks would be held in an atmosphere of sincerity in the interest of the Malay race in this country and not to serve the interests of any political party.

Several of them when contacted said the talks should be held as soon as possible to resolve the problem of disunity among the Malays, which they believed had reached a critical level.

The Umno Management Committee chaired by Umno Deputy President Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi yesterday resolved to propose to Umno President and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that talks be held between him and the two leaders of the Malay based opposition parties -- Datuk Fadzil Noor of PAS and Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah of Keadilan.

President of the Peninsular Malay Students Federation Datuk Suhaimi Ibrahim said the Umno initiative to hold the talks should be viewed from a positive angle.

"We are happy over this development and in the spirit of the month of Syawal it should lead to unity among the Malays."

He said the talks provided an opportunity for the three parties -- Umno, PAS and Keadilan -- to face each other in search of unity and this would benefit the Malays.

He expressed the hope that the talks would be held in an atmosphere of harmony and openness such as compromise and mutual respect for each other's views.

He said the claim by certain groups that the talks would only benefit Umno was a narrow perception and should be ignored.

Umno veteran Tan Sri Aishah Ghani in welcoming the proposal, said the parties involved should be sincere and put aside political differences.

"If each one of them is insincere, the talks will not be fruitful and for agreement to be reached they should not raise issues which will instil hatred. I feel the disunity among the Malays at present is quite serious," she said.

The Islamic Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM) also expressed full support for the proposed talks among the three parties to build Malay unity which was the basis for national unity involving the Chinese and the Indians.

Its President Ahmad Azam Abdul Rahman said national political unity and racial unity would break down when Malay unity collapsed.

"ABIM is of the view that Malay politicking had reached a critical level to the extent of too much time being spent on handling political issues rather than on problems of development and preparing Muslims for the challenges of globalisation," he said.

He said the results of the 1999 General Election and the by-election that followed showed no sign that the Malay political crisis would end and hence a political formula agreeable to all three parties should be found.

Executive Director of the Institute of Policy Studies Khalid Jaafar said any effort to reunite the Malays could not ignore former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"We cannot look upon Anwar as just an individual but view him from the aspect of the moral strength alongside him and the political strength

behind him," said Khalid who is the former press secretary to Anwar.

President of the Malaysian Youth Council (MBM) Saifuddin Abdullah proposed that Umno, PAS and Keadilan declare a moratorium on all mutual accusations and attacks.

Even though political ceramahs could be held, the parties concerned should respect the "cease fire"

Hence they would not be exposed to issues that would create disunity, he added.

-- BERNAMA

RZS AHH AAM