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Mahathir-Puteri

PUTERI UMNO HEAD TO BE ACCORDED STATUS OF UMNO VICE PRESIDENT

KUALA LUMPUR, May 10 (Bernama) -- The head of Puteri Umno will be accorded the status of Umno vice president when the movement is institutionalised as an Umno entity, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president, said that the Umno Supreme Council at its meeting here today agreed to amendments to the party's constitution pertaining to Puteri Umno to be made at a special session during the Umno general assembly to be held in June.

"The amendments to be made have been agreed to by the Supreme Council and they include a provision that Puteri's head will become one of Umno's vice presidents and they will be accorded similar status at the divisional and branch levels," he said at a news conference after the Supreme Council meeting at the Umno headquarters at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here.

Dr Mahathir said that the status of the Puteri Umno head should be the same as currently accorded to the Umno Youth and Wanita Umno chiefs as Puteri Umno was a wing of the party.

"There is no reason why we shouldn't treat Puteri the same as the Wanita and Youth (movements)...whatever status enjoyed by the Youth and Wanita chiefs should also be accorded to Puteri Umno at all levels," he said.

Puteri Umno, set up on Aug 3, 2000 is an Umno wing whose membership are open to those aged 35 and below.

Asked to elaborate on the cooperation between Umno and PAS on the issue of Palestine and whether it marks the beginning of solidarity between both parties, Dr Mahathir said that Umno welcomes PAS' cooperation on the matter but it does not mean that Umno shares the same views as PAS on all issues.

He said that difference of opinion still exist between Umno and PAS and for as long as this situation prevails, it would be rather difficult for the two parties to come together.

"We can work it out if they are willing to work out...there are areas probably where we shouldn't fight each other like on the issue of mastery of knowledge and pursuit of education. But if PAS were to say that knowledge is unimportant, that we cannot accept," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that efforts to achieve unity among the Malays were most welcomed but there must be a strong basis like over the issue of Israeli atrocities against the Palestinians.

"In this matter, we have no problem cooperating with PAS and others in efforts to oppose Israel's actions against Palestine," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that Umno had long been struggling for unity among the Malays as seen from its efforts to consolidate the support of the Malay states in facing the challenges of the Malayan Union, in putting down British colonialism and in attaining independence for the country.

"This should be recognised by all," he said.

Asked whether Umno will take the initiative for both parties to reach a consensus, Dr Mahathir said that the party had attempted such an effort but the response was not encouraging.

"If there is quite a satisfactory response, we (Umno and PAS) can sit down and discuss to seek the best solution," he said.

Asked whether the premier lecture series on the Palestinian issue which brought together the leaders of the two parties will be extended to the

states, Dr Mahathir said that it was not necessary.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is Umno deputy president, told the news conference that the Umno management had agreed to approve 44 new Umno branches.

He said that the party's management would conduct a campaign to increase the number of Umno members especially among the younger generation to boost the membership of the Umno Youth, Wanita Umno and Puteri Umno.

Abdullah said that preparations would be made for the official launch of Puteri Umno after the relevant amendments had been approved at the special session.

He also said that a mammoth rally would be held tomorrow in conjunction with the 56th anniversary of Umno.

A tahlil would be held tonight, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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