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Dr M hopes Umno-Pas meeting will succeed

LANGKAWI, Sat. - Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad hoped a meeting could be held between Umno and Pas to discuss issues related to Muslim unity and the Islamic faith.

"I hope that it will succeed," Dr Mahathir said when commenting on statements from Pas and Umno leaders over the possibility of a meeting to discuss problems facing Muslims.

He said this after visiting the Langkawi Bird Paradise in Kampung Belanga Pecah here today. Accompanying him were his wife Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and wife Datin Seri Sharifah Hamidah Syed Hamid.

On Thursday, Umno acting president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said the party was prepared to co-operate with Pas to find pragmatic solutions to the progress of Muslims.

In Kuantan, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, in welcoming the meeting, said as long as the discussions were not politicised, Umno would maintain a stand that religion and politics did not mix and that each should be addressed on separate platforms.

"We have no problems meeting Pas for any talks as long it doesn't politicise Islam," he said after opening the Pekan Umno election machinery course at a hotel here today.

In Jasin, Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang said his party hoped that the proposed muzakarah (discussion) with Umno would be done in public.

Pas, he said, was also willing to meet Umno and discuss issues without any conditions.

"It would, however, be better if the meeting is held in the open and telecast live on national television, like debates during the United States presidential race," he said at a ceramah in Kelubi here last night.