

Mahathir: Umno needs PAS, will back Hadi's contentious bill

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Umno will support PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang's contentious Private Member's Bill, according to Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The former premier said this is because Umno needed the Islamic party's support at this point.

However, Mahathir, who led Umno for more than two decades, said the situation was different during his time.

"Before, during my time, they will disagree," he told reporters at the re-launch of the Perdana Global Peace Foundation's (PGPF) War Disaster Fund in Kuala Lumpur this afternoon.

During the final sitting of the Dewan Rakyat for the May session last Thursday, the government raised eyebrows when it fast-tracked the motion in relation to the Hudud Bill despite it being listed as the last item on the order paper.

Though Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Azalina Othman Said described this as a display of Putrajaya's commitment towards parliamentary reform, the move however reignited speculation of collusion between Umno and PAS.

PAS Youth chief Nik Mohamad Abduh Nik Abdul Aziz also admitted his party had received cooperation from Umno on this matter.

However, the debate was postponed on Hadi's request that lawmakers be given more time to prepare.

The issue also caused tremors in the ruling coalition, with the presidents of MCA, MIC and Gerakan threatening to resign from their cabinet positions if the bill is passed.

The bill is officially named the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) (Amendment) Bill 2016.

It seeks to amend the Syariah Courts (Criminal Jurisdiction) Act 1965 or Act 355, which limits the Syariah Court's punishment.

It is often referred to as the 'Hudud Bill' as it would ultimately pave the way for the partial implementation of the Islamic penal code, specifically in PAS-ruled Kelantan.

On a separate matter, Mahathir implored the media to highlight the War Disaster Fund (WDF) to encourage individuals and organisations to make contributions that would be used by non-profit organisations to assist war-torn nations.

"With the launching of WDF, we hope to be able to reach other areas where we have not reached out to before.

"We hope to increase our efforts in alleviating the humanitarian crises in the Middle East, particularly within Syria.

"The WDF is yet another initiative to PGPF's efforts to assist war-ravaged nations," said PGPF chairperson Norian Mai.

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