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Umno-Debate (morning)

WANITA UMNO PROPOSES STIFFER PENALTIES TO CURB MONEY POLITICS

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 11 (Bernama) -- The Wanita Umno today called for more punitive action be taken against delegates who accepted money and not only on candidates vying for posts in the party election who practised money politics.

The movement's representative Norliza Yusof who continued the debate on the motion of thanks to the president's policy speech in the second day of the Umno General Assembly here today said the delegates involved must be suspended from the party for not less than a year and barred from voting.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who is also Umno president in delivering his policy speech when opening the assembly yesterday made an impassioned plea to Umno delegates to reject money politics in the interests of the race, religion and country.

"Let it be if we have fewer members but free from corruption," she said.

She also said Umno must have its own investigation body similar to that of the Anti-Corruption Agency (ACA) with the authority to investigate anyone suspected to be involved in money politics and abuse of power.

Sabah representative Datuk Kasitah Gadam said Umno should draw up a permanent code of ethics for elections and campaigning at all levels of the party polls in efforts to curb money politics.

The proposed code of ethics must be used at the lower levels of the party -- branch and divisions, he said.

"It is because money politics start at the stage of electing delegates, the supreme council should come up with the code and conduct for campaigning at branch and divisional levels," he said.

Kasitah, who also stressed on the importance of national integration, proposed that a railway track be built to link northern Sabah with Kuching in Sarawak and from there start a ferry service to Johor.

Melaka Umno representative Datuk Abdul Aziz Tapa said the scorch of money politics in Umno now had actually rooted since the 60s.

"It's only that before it was called coffee money given by a leader to his supporters," said the party veteran to the laughter of the delegates.

In a lighter vein, Abdul Aziz asked the delegates: "Who started money politics,?" while turning to the special stage where the supreme council members were sitting, once again the delegates broke out into laughter.

On a serious note, he said giving "coffee money" could turn into a practice which could jeopardise the party when the amount and value was big and becomes a norm.

Johor representative Abu Bakar Dewa urged the party leadership to initiate a programme to mould knowledgeable and good personality leaders.

He also touched on the return of former Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) members to the Umno fold saying every Umno member must accept them with open heart.

"After joining Umno, they must become the Gurkha soldiers who are noted for their loyalty to their leader," he said referring to a recent statement by former S46 president Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah that he was prepared to become an "Umno Gurkha".

Umno Youth representative Ismail Taib said disciplinary committees must be set up at branch, division and state levels in efforts to wipe out money politics and corruption in the party.

He regretted that such practices were still going on although in

previous Umno General Assemblies delegates had agreed to stop such activities.

"Make this assembly as a forum to seek ways to overcome the menace. We don't want Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to cry alone, we together with party leaders must tackle the issue," he said.

Every party delegate attending this assembly on their return must carry out the responsibility to eradicate money politics which could destroy the party rendering it unable to pursue its struggles to champion the cause of the Malays in the next 10 or 20 years.

"We cannot depend on ministers or party leaders to deal with the matter, party members at grassroot level should also shoulder the task," he said.

He regretted that there were still groups among the Malays who wanted to destroy the party which had paved the way for the country's rapid development.

-- BERNAMA

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