

12/04/1997

Anwar: Money politics has resurfaced (HL)

Manan Osman; Mimi Syed Yusof

IPOH, Fri. - Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said money politics, corruption and abuse of power have resurfaced in the party and warned that those responsible could be suspended or expelled.

This development was discussed at yesterday's meeting of the Umno disciplinary and management committee, of which he is chairman. It will also be brought up at the party's supreme council meeting to be chaired by Prime Minister and party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tomorrow.

Anwar, who is also Deputy Prime Minister, said the issue came to light during the current Umno branch meetings where a number of heads had been found to have violated party rules and regulations.

He said he had received information some that branch heads had been using money, organised trips for members and had deprived members of their right to attend branch meetings.

He was addressing a gathering of State party leaders at the Menteri Besar's residence during his day-long visit today. Also present were his wife Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib who is Umno State liaison chairman and his wife Raja Puan Sri Noora Ashikin Raja Abdullah.

Anwar said the right of members to attend meetings should not be denied as without their support the party would not be able to function properly.

"All Umno members have the right to attend meetings. If this right is challenged, we will take all necessary action to stop it," he said, adding that the question of party ethics was not something that should be taken lightly.

He expressed disappointment that despite the warning issued by party president Dr Mahathir during last year's general assembly, the situation still persisted.

"Although the number involved is small, representing only about one per cent of the branches which have held their meetings, immediate steps must be taken to stop the practice."

Anwar however warned the media not to exaggerate the issue saying that so far only four to five branches were involved.

He said the meeting had decided that an early warning was necessary to remind those responsible of the repercussions.

He said the party was strong because of the support of the rakyat who gave the mandate for it to govern the country in a just and fair manner.

"Therefore, we have to maintain the strength of the party and refrain from negative activities which can ruin the party."

Anwar said he was confident that the majority of the people wanted leaders who were clean and fair and the party had a responsibility to see that this trust was not betrayed.

Later when asked whether the recurrence of the problem was because no action was taken against those responsible earlier, Anwar said: "We are acting based on information."

"If the allegation is too general or based on rumours, then action will be taken against those who started the rumours."

He said the committee had been receiving information from branches on such malpractices and this would be discussed at tomorrow's supreme council meeting.

Anwar later opened a closed-door Umno Youth leadership and unification

programme at the Ulu Kenas Youth Camp near Kuala Kangsar.

About 80 Umno youth deputy divisional heads attended the three-day programme.

Its chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi speaking to reporters later, said Anwar had advised youth members to fulfil the youth agenda and to give priority to youth ideals.

Zahid also said that the Umno deputy president had proposed that Umno youth approach the poverty problem firsthand and not to allow a third party to handle the matter.

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