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Anwar challenged to confront issue head-on

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - As Anwar Ibrahim increased the tempo of his roadshow, his former colleagues in the Government and Umno have challenged him to confront the issue facing him head-on.

They say he should not skirt the issue by promoting unrelated agenda like his call for reformasi.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak urged him to concentrate on the allegations against him and not focus on other parties like the police.

He said Anwar should not harbour ill thoughts against the police force as they (the police) were professionals who were only interested in seeking the truth.

"How can he (Anwar) liken our police to Israeli intelligence agencies? The police are neutral," Najib, who is also Education Minister, said after the ministry's post-Cabinet meeting.

Anwar, who was sacked as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister on Sept 2 and as Umno deputy president on Sept 4 for alleged moral misconduct, yesterday called on the police to use the rule of law and not law of the jungle.

Anwar claimed that when police arrested his former secretary Mohamed Ahmad at the Finance Ministry, Mohamed's wife and family members were warned not to alert anybody. He had questioned the action, saying it was like those adopted by the Israeli intelligence agencies, Shabak and Mossad.

Dewan Negara president Tan Sri Mohamed Ya'acob, meanwhile, said he was at a loss with the need for the so-called reformation movement by Anwar as Umno had on many occasions carried out reforms for the benefit of the people.

He also urged the former Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, whom he described as "an individual with rational thoughts", to accept in good faith his sacking.

Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa said Anwar should focus more on "clarifying" the charges made against him, rather than turning his dismissal from Government into a "political issue".

He asked why Anwar had neither brought up the issue of reformation nor highlighted grievances he might have had on alleged instances of nepotism or cronyism when he was the Deputy Prime Minister.

Anwar should not keep "harping on things that have nothing to do with the reason why he was dismissed from Government", which was mainly his moral misconduct, he added.

Likening Anwar to a harimau luka (wounded tiger), Annuar said Anwar should "sober down and not be so emotional" by accusing all and sundry, including the police and judiciary, of conspiring against him.

"Once the legal process is set in motion he would have to face reality and the pertinent issues can no longer be covered up by rhetoric," he told a Press conference after handing out excellent service awards to his ministry's staff.

Annuar emphasised that the dismissal of a Cabinet Minister was the prerogative of the Prime Minister.

"Under the law one has to prove a crime beyond reasonable doubt, but in this case a slight doubt was sufficient for Anwar's removal," he said.

He also said Anwar should refrain from inciting public sentiment and

inviting the public to play "judge" when in the first place the public was not sure of the facts.

"He should also not go around saying the Indonesians and those from other countries 'supported' him.

"I have met several ministers in Indonesia. They may sympathise with him but that does not necessarily mean they support him," he said, adding that sympathy and support meant two different things.

Annuar earlier abandoned a prepared text to present an off-the-cuff speech on how Anwar had changed his stance of 16 years in just 48 hours, by attacking the very foundations of the Government.

Annuar said he had not made many Press statements on this issue to date, as Anwar was his friend, but "enough was enough".

"I cannot stand back and see how hypocritical Anwar has become in his attack of the Government, an institution he once appeared to support wholeheartedly," he said.

In Kuala Terengganu, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad said Anwar should not waste his time, energy and money by holding roadshows which can affect the unity and harmony of the people.

He said if Anwar was a true Muslim, he should talk about things which could unite the people and were good for the nation, especially efforts to overcome the economic problems.

"He must be calm and patient. If he wants to talk, we have a place where he can make his defence. If he still wants to talk, he should not loath the Government, for the policies of which he was once also responsible."

Wan Mokhtar said Anwar should regard his removal from the Government and the party as "a test of his faith" and that he should believe that "God is with those who are patient".

Wan Mokhtar was asked if Anwar would be allowed to give talks to the public and if action would be taken against the former Umno deputy president for holding ceramah in Terengganu.

He said Anwar should obtain the necessary permit before holding such talks but advised him against giving them as "it is not good for unity and harmony".

"We have laws and conditions for such activity and I believe he is aware of it," he added.

In Malacca, Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin said leaders were public figures whose behaviour and movements always came under the scrutiny of the people and must, therefore, have an unblemished character and personality.

"They must be clean and seen to be clean. They should never be involved or engaged in undesirable social or moral problems," he added at the launching of the Kota Melaka Umno division bulletin, Sinar Kota.

Abu Zahar, who is also State Umno liaison committee chief, said leaders must bear in mind that they should continue to uphold the policies of the Government and party even when their services were no longer needed. He expressed regret over Anwar's move for reformation in order to gain grassroots support.

In Ipoh, Perak Umno information bureau chief Datuk Ramly Zahari advised division and branch leaders to view the expulsion from a wider perspective and not confine it to just two people - the party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Anwar.

He said the expulsion of Anwar was a disciplinary action and not just any action taken by the party president.

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