

11 AUG 1998

Anwar - Mahathir

ANWAR REPEATS HE WILL NOT CHALLENGE DR MAHATHIR

PULAU PINANG, Aug 11 (Bernama) -- In a public display of loyalty to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim reiterated today that he will not contest the Umno presidency in the party's election next year.

Anwar, who is Umno Deputy President and also Pulau Pinang Umno liaison chief, said all divisions in the state would nominate Dr Mahathir to retain his post.

"Talk that there will be a contest for the Umno presidency next year is baseless and does not make sense at all," said Anwar, who is Deputy Prime Minister, at the opening of Menara Umno by Dr Mahathir here.

Anwar, who spoke before Dr Mahathir addressed the gathering, said he was taking opportunity of the occasion to kill all speculations about him challenging the party president.

He said that if there was still such talk after this, then it would clearly be the work of ill-intentioned people who were out to pit Dr Mahathir and him against each other.

"I'm together with all others in pursuing the party's struggle and I'm indebted to Dr Mahathir ... and I want to show my loyalty to Dr Mahathir," he said.

Anwar said he had repeatedly stated his stand of not contesting the presidency at the party's general assembly year after year but such talk kept circulating.

"Dr Mahathir himself knows at times during meetings my views would differ but we don't think this can create rifts," said Anwar.

The deputy prime minister said: "Dr Mahathir is a seasoned leader.. he has vast experience...his skills are extraordinary. If I were to compare myself with him, I'm just a student.

"I'm aware ... I can't go against teachers, what more against a father," said Anwar.

In lighter vein, Anwar said while all party divisions in Pulau Pinang would nominate Dr Mahathir to remain as party president, they should also not forget to nominate him as deputy president in next year's Umno elections.

Anwar said in the name of the state Umno liaison committee and "with permission of the state Barisan Nasional and the people of Pulau Pinang", all pledged solid support for the prime minister's handling of the current economic problems.

Dr Mahathir, in his speech opening the complex, thanked Anwar for announcing that all Umno divisions in Pulau Pinang would nominate him to retain the president's post.

However, said Dr Mahathir, these divisions should not forget to nominate Anwar as deputy president as well.

"Don't just nominate, but also vote," the prime minister added.

-- BERNAMA

JM AHM rn