

05 SEP 1998

Rafidah-Anwar

ANWAR'S REMOVAL NOT DUE TO POLITICAL PROBLEMS: RAFIDAH

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 5 (Bernama) -- Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz said today Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's expulsion from the party has nothing to do with politics, economic issues or his relationship with Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed.

She said the expulsion and his removal as Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister were solely due to problems arising from his alleged misconduct as mentioned in the book "50 Dalil Mengapa Anwar Tidak Boleh Jadi PM".

Rafidah, who is the Minister of International Trade and Industry, told reporters this after signing the minutes of the Kuala Lumpur-Taipeh Trade and Investment Meeting.

She expressed regret over the statements made by Anwar following his removal from the government, saying they gave the impression that there was instability in the country.

"Not only can this instil negative feelings among local people, but also have an impact on foreign investors wishing to invest in this country. They may defer their intentions (to invest here)," she said.

Rafidah also hit out at Anwar for allegedly getting university students, youth associations and non-governmental organisations involved in the campaign to defend him.

She said the Umno Supreme Council took the decision to expel Anwar after considering the evidence before it and hearing his explanation.

The council, she said, abided by the principle that any national or state leader facing "problems in courts" must withdraw from the party and government to prevent the party or government from being dragged to the court.

"So it's up to the leader concerned to defend himself in court," she said.

Rafidah called on the people to view the council's decision objectively and refrain from making various interpretations, conspiring or raising other issues.

She said the government's main task now was to revive the country's economy.

"Right now Anwar Ibrahim is not important, Rafidah Aziz is not important, no one is important. Leaders come and go...live and die.

"But if the economic problems cannot be resolved and persist until the next generation, the situation will be worse still," she added.

In JOHOR BAHRU, Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Mustapa Mohamed said the people should abide and respect the decision of Dr Mahathir to remove Anwar.

As prime minister, he said Dr Mahathir has at his disposal vast information and has considered all factors before deciding to dismiss Anwar from the Cabinet.

"We must have trust in our leaders and accept the unanimous decision of the Supreme Council," he said when closing a briefing on the Entrepreneur Development Fund at Hotel Seri Malaysia.

Mustapa hoped the people would be patient and continue to give their support to Dr Mahathir.

-- BERNAMA

RAM ABG