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Johor delegate's plan to create intellectuals and entrepreneurs

UMNO Johor has called for the creation of 17,645 intellectuals and entrepreneurs a year by giving at least one child of a party member at every branch an opportunity for further studies.

Its representative, Encik Ahmad Mazlan said, at the party's 52nd general assembly in Kuala Lumpur yesterday: "We are practising affirmative action and not nepotism when we want to improve the lives of the children of farmers and fishermen."

He said this when speaking in support of the resolution on the presidential address.

Ahmad suggested that sufficient assistance be given to small- and medium-scale industries as well as small businesses "to ensure that they do not sink in the economic turmoil".

He lauded the move by the Government to provide 30 funds worth RM10 billion for these businesses.

While these funds exist, he said, banks need to facilitate disbursement to speed up the generation of economic growth.

Terengganu delegate Encik Abdul Rashid Ngah, in proposing the resolution, said members should look towards religion to face the economic problems.

"We have to realise that this is a test and trial. We need to believe that with patience and bravery, we can face the economic problems that are before us," he said.

On nepotism, he said leaders both in the Government and corporate sectors are chosen based on their abilities.

Citing an example, he said Datuk Seri Najib Abdul Razak is not Education Minister because he is the son of former prime minister Tun Abdul Razak but because of his capabilities.

Abdul Rashid stressed the need to strengthen Umno, as "many people are hoping for a big rift as a reflection that there is no unity in Umno".

He is confident, however, that as a party that "has fought for independence, faced the confrontation, the May 13 incident ... the backbone of the country as it faced economic problems in the 1980s, Umno is mature and strong and will not break up in these gruelling and trying times".

He assured party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that he need not worry or be hesitant in making trips abroad as the party can be left in the hands of deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

This assurance was lined with a subtle reminder that Supreme Council members will closely monitor Anwar's actions in the absence of Dr Mahathir.

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