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`See sacking as blessing in disguise'

MALACCA, Sun. - The sacking of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as Deputy Prime Minister and his expulsion from Umno should be viewed as a "blessing in disguise" as it was to cleanse the administration and party of those with low morals.

Party vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said if Anwar's morals had not been disclosed, he might have led the country to destruction.

"It is fortunate that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was able to find out Anwar's faults before he passed the torch to him.

"Being patriotic to the country, race and religion, Dr Mahathir had to take the painful decision of sacking Anwar from the Cabinet and making sure the person he had groomed did not become the next Prime Minister."

Abdullah, who is also Foreign Minister, was addressing about 2,000 State Umno branch leaders at the Al-Azim mosque.

Speaking to reporters on Anwar's so-called reformation movement and his Permatang Pauh Declaration, Abdullah said Umno had the credit of starting reformation when its members went against the Malayan Union in 1946 and later striving to uplift the position of Bumiputeras through the New Economic Policy.

Furthermore, he said a reformation would only be successful if it was initiated by a leader of high calibre and good reputation and not by one who had low morals.

On claims by Anwar that he was the victim of a political conspiracy which was aimed at preventing him from challenging Dr Mahathir for the president's post, Abdullah said it was not true.

Later at night in Kuala Lumpur, Abdullah briefed Federal Territory Umno members on Anwar's sacking from the party.

Abdullah said when Anwar was removed from the Cabinet and party, he was in Durban, South Africa representing Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at the Non-Alligned Movement meeting.

"While I was there, not even one head of government asked me on Anwar's removal. They were more interested to know the capital control measures announced by Dr Mahathir the day before.

"I had to call home and ask for copies of transcript of the interview between newspaper editors and Dr Mahathir on the new capital control measures for the heads of government."

Abdullah said only four Foreign Ministers had asked him on Anwar's removal.

Also present at the briefing were Umno information chief Datuk Dr Yusof Nor, Federal Territory Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Dr Suleiman Mohd and Umno supreme council member Datuk Ibrahim Ali.

Abdullah said he was also confident that Anwar would not be detained under the Internal Security Act although he had many times mentioned this possibility.

"If ever, Anwar will be brought to court to answer allegations against him.

"There is no need for him to tell the people that he will be arrested under the ISA just to get sympathy," he said.

Earlier, Suleiman said the Federal Territory Umno would be the first to "face" Anwar if he attempted to manipulate the people.

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