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Anwar - Umno

UNITE AND DISCARD SELFISHNESS, ANWAR TELLS UMNO MEMBERS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim today prescribed to party members the right stuff in facing the current economic problems: remain united solidly behind the Umno leadership and stick to party ideals.

"Umno needs to close ranks and stand in line behind Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir (Mohamad) to deal with this daunting crisis.

"Discard selfish interests. Avoid factions," he said when simultaneously opening the annual assemblies of the party's Youth and Wanita wings at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here, ahead of the 52nd Umno general assembly tomorrow.

Party members should learn from the past follies of factionalism, he said in apparent reference to an Umno which was deeply divided as in 1987.

He said: "Obviously there will be opportunists abound, pitting us against another. Don't be taken in by the foreign media or foreigners out to put our leaders at loggerhead with one another. Don't ever get trapped in their game.

"Let's us not dance to the tunes of the frustrated and displaced."

Anwar reminded party members against being duped by "two-faced jealous groups or their mercenaries who are deeply-smearred in filth of lies".

Of late the foreign media have been ridiculing Dr Mahathir's leadership and suggesting that the prime minister has partly contributed to Malaysia's current economic woes.

The foreign media have instead been portraying Anwar as the leader who could get Malaysia out of the problems.

Anwar and Dr Mahathir have also been made to appear as incompatible with one another in their approaches to deal with the economic turmoil.

This tumultous period called on all Umno members to remain calm and in control of their emotions, he said.

"Don't be restless like someone who has stepped on burning cinders. Let's not lose our bearing," he said.

Anwar said Umno should not lose grip of its ideals, which hinged on Islam and the Malay culture, and not feel intimidated but instead reinforce its conviction in the party's cause.

Anwar called on party members not to let others manipulate Umno into digressing from its own agendas for the Malays, the economy, as well social, religious and cultural ones besides those for vision 2020 to make Malaysia an industrialised nation by 2020 and for the creation of a civilised society.

Anwar emphasised the need for everyone -- consumers, traders, laymen and leaders alike -- to make sacrifices to get the nation back on the road to economic recovery.

"We'll never get out of the current rut if there are sections who only care for themselves, lustful groups insisting they be handled first. During the good times, they're out to monopolise everything and in difficult times they insisted they be rescued ahead of others by whatever means," he said.

In fact, said Anwar, who is also Finance Minister, such groups had even gone to the extent of making threats, to government institutions included, that their problems be resolved first.

Steering the country towards economic recovery called for upholding of national interests and furtherance of the people's cause, he said.

"Revitalising the economy is akin to treating a sick person. Bitter

pills have to be swallowed. At times the pain is greater during treatment. We have to be patient. There's no short cut to recovery," he said.

Anwar recorded his appreciation of the present Umno Youth leadership for bringing back confidence in the movement which he described as a sombre one previously.

The party's youth wing, he said, has now re-emerged as the voice crusading for the cause of the masses and social justice besides being vocally critical of society's ills.

He also commended Wanita Umno for launching Asnita, the country's first unit trust fund specially for women, in its effort towards overcoming the economic problems.

These efforts by the party's two wings were reflective of the their role as Umno's new protagonists, he said.

Anwar urged both the party wings to change their mind-sets from that of outmoded thinking to face the challenges of globalisation, borderless world, the information explosion and demands of a civilised society.

"The challenges of the new millennium cannot be met with thoughts of the feudal past. Potted thinking is no answer to the challenges of globalisation," he said.

Anwar said Umno's strength hinged on its relevance in that it was able "to fathom each and every ripple of the society's motion and in the ability of each of us to share with the people the same breath and aspiration."

On reflection, he said Umno itself was the fruition 40 years later of the seeds of reforms sowed by Syed Sheikh al-hadi, editor of the "Majalah al-Imam" in 1906.

"Without reforms, the Malays will be obsolete and forgotten, drowning under the folds of history," he said.

Given the current economic downturn, Anwar said, carrying out the agenda to aggrandise the Malays would be problematic since resources would be limited, what more with the private sector surrendering all its social obligations back to the government, he said.

"Fiscal policies should be directed at helping groups in dire need of aid. This also means helping petty and -medium-scale traders. Poverty eradication efforts would need additional funds. Bursaries for poor students would have to be activated fast," he said.

Quoting verse al-Hasyar:7 of the Quran, Anwar added: "We should fight for social justice and equitable distribution of economic benefits so that wealth does not circulate only among the rich."

-- BERNAMA

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