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Why Penang Umno must remain strong

PENANG, Mon. - Penang Umno must remain strong as it is the most important vehicle for the continued struggle of the Malays in the State, party vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said.

He said if Penang Umno members acknowledge the importance of the party in the State, then they should continue with efforts to strengthen it and pool resources to overcome any obstacles that could weaken the party.

"In the case of former Penang Umno liaison committee chairman Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, he is no longer our State leader.

"In fact, he is no longer an Umno member, but when he was, we followed all his instructions."

"Although without Anwar, we must continue with efforts to strengthen our party," he added.

He said this to reporters last night when asked if unity among Penang Umno members was affected in the absence of Anwar, who is now facing charges of sexual misconduct and corruption.

Abdullah, who is also Foreign Minister, had earlier closed a three-day Made-in-Malaysia products exposition, organised by the Jelutong Umno division in Sungai Nibong.

Also present were division chairman Abdul Rashid Ismail, State Legislative Assembly Speaker Datuk Yahaya Abdul Hamid and State Tourism Committee chairman Datuk Kee Phaik Cheen.

Abdullah, who is also Kepala Batas Umno division chairman, said Penang Umno members must fully understand and continue to learn to be in the party without Anwar.

"Even in Penang Umno, leaders come and go. However, when we fully understand and appreciate the importance of Umno, we will continue to work harder to strengthen the party.

"Umno is the best party. It has a proven track record and the most important party in Barisan Nasional," he said.

He urged party members to focus on efforts by the Government, led by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, to revive the economy.

"The country's leadership has taken bold measures and there are positive signs that the nation's economy can be revived.

"We must follow through with the efforts," he said, adding that efforts to explain to Umno members actions taken by the party leadership and Government to ensure continued political stability and economic growth should be stepped up.

Asked on claims by the Opposition and the Malaysian People's Movement for Justice (Gerak) that they had a strong following among the people following Anwar's sacking from all Government and party posts, Abdullah said it was normal for them to do so to achieve their political agenda.

"In many areas, including in the villages, many people turn up at gatherings organised by the Opposition out of curiosity.

"However, when it comes to selecting a Government, the people will choose Barisan Nasional because it has a proven track record."

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