

13/08/1998

Wide support for Anwar's decision not to contest Umno poll

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Umno leaders today welcomed the announcement by Umno Deputy President Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim not to contest the post of party president in next year's election.

Anwar had said yesterday in Penang that he had also discussed this with leaders of all 11 Umno divisions in Penang and they agreed to renominate Dr Mahathir for the party presidency in next year's election.

Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman said the statement by Anwar, who is also Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister, was timely.

"Such a statement also shows the strong unity among the country's leaders under the leadership of the Prime Minister.

"This is the time for everyone to stay united especially in overcoming the present economic problem plaguing the country," he said after visiting the Terengganu Family Development Foundation at Jalan Sultan Omar in Kuala Terengganu.

In Kuala Terengganu, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad also supported Anwar's decision, adding that all the eight divisions would be asked to name Dr Mahathir as the Umno president and Anwar as the deputy president.

"And, the other States should show their support as well," he said speaking during the launch of the State level book donation drive at Pejabat Pos Besar in Shah Banda.

Wan Mokhtar, who is also Terengganu Umno liaison chief, added that unity was crucial especially when the Prime Minister was given the task of overcoming the country's economic problems and improving relations with Singapore.

In Kuantan, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Khalil Yaakob said Pahang Umno were 100 per cent behind Anwar's statement.

"I also hope all the other State Umno branches will also show their support for Anwar's stand and not worry about the rumours that Anwar would challenge the Prime Minister which are baseless."

In Kota Kinabalu, Sabah Umno will support Dr Mahathir should there be a contest for the number one post during the party's election next year.

"But we (Sabah Umno) know there will be no contest," Deputy Chief Minister and Finance Minister Datuk Osu Sukam said today.

"In the interest of the party there is no necessity for such a contest."

Osu, who is Sabah Umno liaison committee chairman, said Sabah Umno hailed Anwar's statement.

Sabah Barisan Nasional chairman Tan Sri Bernard Dompok also said that by having no contest Umno would ensure not only party unity but also unity in the BN and the country.

In Malacca, all five State Umno divisions here passed a resolution supporting the leadership of Dr Mahathir and his deputy Anwar during the State Umno liaison committee meeting tonight.

Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin, who is State Umno liaison committee chairman, said:

"Earlier this month, the State Umno had pledged before Dr Mahathir, who was in Malacca for a one-day official visit, that the two posts must be left uncontested.

"The resolution is an extension of the declaration."

In Penang, Bernama quoted Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik as saying the early announcement by Anwar to nominate Dr Mahathir for the

party presidency would put to rest speculation.

Sabbaruddin said the announcement would stop talk that Anwar would challenge Dr Mahathir.

He said Penang might be the first State to make such an announcement officially.

"Anwar's announcement this time will have a strong impact as it was made officially in this State," he said.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar said Anwar's decision must be respected by all party members.

In Port Dickson, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad today welcomed Anwar's declaration.

Therefore, he said, Umno members should stop spreading rumours that Anwar would contest the top party post.

"Since Anwar has made his stand clear party members should stop harping on the issue and concentrate on building the party and nation especially during the slowdown," he said.

(END)