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Umno - Zahid (nepotism)

ZAHID EXPLAINS REMARKS ON "NEPOTISM"

KUALA LUMPUR, June 18 (Bernama) -- The Umno Youth's recent remarks suggesting nepotism and cronyism were prompted by its desire for transparency in policy implementation and it was not questioning government policies per se, said its chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

"I want to explain that nepotism and cronyism refer to the practice or act of favouring relatives and friends that has now exceeded racial and religious limits," he said.

He said the movement would continue speaking about nepotism and insist on transparency in efforts to rescue beleaguered companies so as to maintain public confidence in the government.

Ahmad Zahid said this in his policy speech to the Umno Youth assembly, on the theme of "boosting resilience and initiating reforms", at the Putra World Trade Centre here today.

Deputy Prime Minister and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim earlier officiated at the joint opening of the Umno Youth and Wanita assemblies there.

Zahid has for the past fortnight been harping on nepotism and cronyism in the allocation of economic opportunities and made good his earlier promise to explain the issue in detail in his policy speech today.

Zahid said the movement's recent remarks about nepotism and cronyism should not be seen as merely wild accusations or made in collusion with foreign elements.

"Ours is the voice of the people, of the Malays aspiring for an ever strong country, of devotion to Malay dignity and political power. Such is the voice of the Umno Youth," he said.

He said the movement's demand for transparency was for Umno's own consolidation and in the interests of its cause.

The Umno tradition of openness must be upheld, he said.

Grassroot criticisms and views should be accommodated and respected as differences in opinion was only normal in furthering a party cause, he said.

He said it would be most unfortunate to regard dissenting views of the grassroots as voice of opposition out to sow discord in the party.

Sadder still, he said, was to deduce the movement's well-intentioned demand for a more transparent government and accountable leadership as being orchestrated at the beckoning of foreign powers.

This, he said, should not be misconstrued as cleaning the party's dirty linen in public but instead be looked upon as its members' humble admission of weaknesses which they would like to see rectified.

Zahid said it would be naive to assume that existing government policies were 100 per cent perfect and there was no reason not to take corrective measures if they were flawed.

"Our willingness to address these flaws will only boost the people's confidence in the government and Umno," he said.

Zahid questioned whether criticising flawed government policies could divide Umno and that the increasingly knowledgeable younger generation was indeed ignorant of what was happening.

"By choosing not to raise this issue (of nepotism and cronyism), can the academicians, professionals and businessmen be lulled much longer into believing that there is nothing wrong with the implementation of our policies?," he asked.

Zahid said all that Umno Youth hoped was to see wastage, corruption, and favouritism, among other ills, checked.

He said the movement had raised talk of initiating reforms because the masses had entrusted it to do so as allowing only the opposition to harp on such issues would be irksome.

Zahid pledged the Umno Youth's continued support for the government and emphasised that it was never its intention to promote or depose any leader when it raised those issues.

"Let's not confuse our calls for straightening things out with the leadership issue. I have never talked about shoring up or bringing down any leader," he said.

Zahid said he and his vice chief Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein as well as the Umno Youth executive committee members pledged continued support for the party leadership.

"We are not interested in wasting time by involving ourselves with those out to see Umno end up in chaos," he said stressing that the movement needed a bridge to the leadership.

"In this hall we have Mokhzani Mahathir (the prime minister and party president's son) as a strong bridge between Umno Youth and the leadership," he said to the applause of the 495 divisional delegates.

-- BERNAMA

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