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Abdullah calls on Umno members to close ranks

ADDRESSING the party's Youth and Wanita assembly for the first time, Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi called on their leaders to close ranks to strengthen the party and nation.

The Deputy Prime Minister outlined several challenges facing Malaysia and Umno, the backbone of the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition. From outside the country, global economic integration, through the consolidation of the capital markets, is exposing countries to a new threat. The "superpowers" are using trade and economy as a weapon to expand their political supremacy. Economic domination, not military, is being used as a tool of colonisation.

"The present environment demands that we understand the effects and implication of the emerging changes. Only those who are able to be in control and adapt themselves to the new changes will emerge victors," he said.

From within the country, Abdullah cautioned against "a handful of individuals, who are taken up by small, narrow issues, to champion their interest on the Malay race".

He spoke against rhetorics, promises and slogans and demonstrations.

"The people and the country cannot be developed through (them) ... instead, through a complete agenda based on a clear vision and specified framework. The BN Government, led by Umno, has proven that it has the vision and framework to ensure the country's continuous development." Complacency is also an enemy, the deputy president told the delegates. While confidence is clearly returning, Abdullah reminded them of the Malay proverb "Dengar guruh di langit, air di tempayan dicurahkan" and advised the Malays not to over-react by "letting go what we already have in hand for promises which remain just that".

He also called on the Wanita and Youth movements to continue to ensure that the party remains "relevant, energetic and dynamic" into the 21st century.

"New challenges demand that the Malays come up with new ideas to adapt to the new approaches and differing agenda to ensure that we are not sidelined and later become extinct," he said.

Umno Youth and Wanita make up 72.1 per cent of total party membership. Youth members totalled 732,151 and Wanita 1.264 million, accounting for 26.4 per cent and 45.7 per cent respectively of the total number of registered party members.

Abdullah said Malaysia is on track towards economic recovery, citing factors such as the recovering share market, return of confidence among foreign investors and increasing exports and reserves.

"We have to record our thanks to the measures introduced by (Prime Minister and party president) Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that has enabled us to tide these waves (of changes)," he added.

(END)