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PM's address gets praises from Umno, BN leaders

UMNO president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's address at the Umno General Assembly drew praise from party and Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders yesterday, who commended the frank explanation by the Prime Minister of the economic and political challenges facing the nation.

Umno vice president and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said Dr Mahathir gave a "clear and brave" explanation of several important issues, including the danger of recolonisation and the reasons for Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's sacking.

"This is the first time the Prime Minister has given an explanation on his own behalf about what has happened. Hopefully such an explanation will establish greater understanding among Malaysians about what has happened," he said.

MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik said Dr Mahathir gave a frank and fighting speech that touched on attempts by currency traders to undermine, subvert and destroy the country.

"I think he told it like it is. The speech touched on the whole Anwar Ibrahim saga, a saga of betrayal of his mentor, how he was scheming, planning and plotting to overthrow Dr Mahathir. It was an eye-opener for those who don't understand the whole episode," he said.

Dr Ling said Dr Mahathir also exploded the myth of a proposed coalition of opposition parties by showing that they had different ideologies and dreams, yet "sleeping on the same bed of nails".

"They will never sleep peacefully together. Every time they move they feel pain. These are very strange bedfellows," he added.

Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik meanwhile, said he can vouch for some of the fiscal and monetary policies of the Treasury under Anwar's helm that actually frustrated efforts to revive the economy.

"We all were reluctant although it was a Cabinet decision. In Cabinet there is a certain degree of agreement that is given to the Minister in charge of the portfolio. I am glad that we took the brave decision in September to change the direction and remove the impediments and barriers," he said.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu meanwhile, said Dr Mahathir's speech teaches Malaysians that they must think of the country first before their own personal ambitions.

"The future of the country and the power to rule this country must be in the hands of Malaysians. We can take care of our country and provide for our people. Nobody has to teach us," he said.

BN secretary general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said Dr Mahathir has exposed directly the reasons for everything that has happened over the past year, and cleared any remaining confusion or doubts among the public and Umno members.

"Umno's strength is important to the BN. A strong Umno means a strong BN," he said.

Umno vice president Datuk Seri Najib Razak said the speech was one of the longest and strongest by Dr Mahathir at an Umno General Assembly. He said Dr Mahathir spoke sincerely and confidently, and his explanation about the Anwar issue will strengthen the resolve of Umno members.

Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah said the speech cleared up what has happened in Umno for those who still cannot accept the drastic measures taken with regards to Anwar and the economic recovery. "I think he has succeeded in

doing this. He explained everything," he added.

Datuk Rais Yatim meanwhile, said Dr Mahathir's message for Umno members to reject those who collaborate with foreigners against the party is in line with the view that Malaysians should not become puppets of foreign interests.

Asked if Dr Mahathir's comments may be held in contempt of Anwar's ongoing sodomy court case, Rais, a lawyer by training, said he does not think it is contemptuous.

"He did not mention anything about the court process or procedure. He did not touch on facts in court. What he said were things which were already largely known so far," he said.

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