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Umno-Debate (address)

PULAU PINANG UMNO INTACT DESPITE ANWAR'S EXPULSION

KUALA LUMPUR, June 19 (Bernama) -- The sacking of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the government and Umno in September last year has not eroded the strength of Pulau Pinang Umno although he once headed the State Umno Liaison committee.

" Don't worry about stories that Pulau Pinang will fall (to the opposition hands) in the coming general election," Pulau Pinang delegate Datuk Haji Mohamed Zain Omar told the 53rd Umno General Assembly.

He said Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's explanation on the issue in his opening address yesterday had given the state Umno a clearer picture to explain to the people in the state.

" I thank Dr Mahathir for giving a clear information on Anwar's issue," he said when debating the motion on the presidential address at the second day of the assembly today.

He also said all 11 Umno divisions in Pulau Pinang supported Dr Mahathir.

Mohamed Zain also called on the party leadership to pay attention to the problem of voters' names missing from electoral rolls which was worrying.

" Names of about 120 people have suddenly disappeared while that of the deceased have not been struck out from the rolls...I'm afraid there are Keadilan members," he said.

He hoped Dr Mahathir would look into the matter because "if they could play around with Umno, they could also do so against the prime minister and others.

Touching on the controversial novel "Shit" authored by Datuk Shahnun Ahmad, Mohamed Zain described the National Literary figure as the real shit, saying the book "shit" meant "Shahnun Is Shit" in short.

He also urged Umno leaders and members to be close to the younger generation particularly students and organise dialogues or gatherings to enable them to understand Umno's struggles.

Selangor delegate Datuk Mohd Mokhtar Ahmad Dahlan raised the issue on the Bar Council, saying it was getting more and more vociferous by the day.

He said the council constantly criticised the government as though all the government did was wrong.

He called for amendments to related laws as was done by other Commonwealth countries to provide for only the Attorney-General to head the council.

" The move is necessary to put a stop to all the nonsense," he said.

Mohd Mokhtar also urged youth organisations such as the Malaysian Association of Youth Clubs (MAYC) and the 4B movement to restructure their organisational set up to woo youths to participate in creative activities and to ensure they remained relevant in the new millennium.

He called on Umno leaders to be pro-active when approaching youths involved in the reformasi movement and to bring them back to the true roots of the Malay culture.

Negeri Sembilan delegate Datuk Darus Salim Bulin said the Japanese Encephalitis (JE) viral outbreak which hit the state recently brought several "blessings" which should serve as a lesson.

For instance, whatever is dirty would cause diseases and reinforced the truth of Islam prohibiting Muslims from eating pork, he said.

It also showed that whatever efforts carried out using dirty tactics and not well managed would give rise to various problems, he said.

" (Following the epidemic) the state government has decided to locate pig farms in a specific area in Bukit Pelandok and must have an oxidation pond approved by the Department of Environment," he said.

Darus Salim also invited the people to visit the state in conjunction with "Visit Negeri Sembilan Year 1999" as the Health Ministry had declared Negeri Sembilan JE-free.

Sabah delegate Datuk Dr Yusof Yaacob hoped Umno's victory and PAS' defeat in all six seats contested by the opposition party in the March 12 and 13 Sabah state election would enhance the spirit of Umno members.

He said PAS candidates not only lost badly but also had their deposits forfeited.

" This should boost the spirit of Umno to face PAS in the coming general election," said Dr Yusof, who is Member of Parliament for Sipitang.

He attributed the resounding victory to several factors including Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's seriousness in championing the cause of Sabahans.

"Nobody can read what is in the mind of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir. Hence, we don't know when the general election will be held," he said.

In fact, Anwar, who thought he could oust Dr Mahathir, finally ended up he himself being sacked from government and Umno, he said.

Dr Yusof also urged Umno members to reject suggestions by certain quarters to let the opposition win in BN strongholds to experience the administration of a new government.

" Discard such views from your minds and instead work hard to ensure BN's victory," he said.

He also called on party leaders not to be selfish but support whoever nominated by the leadership to contest in the general election.

Johor representative Datuk Zainal Abidin Mohamed Zin urged Umno members to give priority to the party's agenda and set aside personal interests.

He said they should continue to keep alive Umno's idealism which gives priority to maintaining unity to ensure progress of the Malay race.

Umno Youth representative Abdul Kadir Daud said Umno's main challenge now was to foster unity among the Malays which the opposition was trying to undermine.

He said Malay unity was shaken when some of them set up PAS thinking that they were more Islamic than Umno members.

The setting up of Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) recently by a Malay splinter group, who felt that they were more just than Umno, also affected Malay unity, he said.

Towards this end, he said, the Umno Youth had decided to accord Malay unity top priority in its agenda.

Abdul Kadir also said the movement hoped Dr Mahathir would continue to lead Umno as he had the ability to identify sources of disunity and take speedy measures to restore Malay unity.

Wanita Umno representative Hajah Hamiah Khatib Awang urged the government to increase allocations and appoint more Syariah Court officers to improve its efficiency.

He said numerous complaints had been received from divorcees and single mothers on the delay by the courts to hear divorce and alimony cases.

He said the movement also wanted the Education Ministry to take over Sekolah Agama Rakyat run by PAS and to turn them into ordinary religious schools.

It should also standardise the curriculum used in religious schools, he added.

The motion on the presidential address was passed unanimously.

-- BERNAMA  
SBJ RON TS