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'Umno should rid itself of corporate figures to curb money politics'

Saiful Azhar Abdullah; Aionon Mohd

MALACCA, Sat. - A veteran Umno member has suggested that the party should not allow corporate people to enter politics if it wants to curb money politics.

Instead, efforts should be focused on grooming them to become successful businessmen.

In a two-hour interview with the New Sunday Times (full interview on P23-24) at his home at Kampung Rim, former Senator, Assemblyman and Malacca Assembly Speaker Tan Sri Abdul Aziz Tapa, 78, said money was the root of the whole problem in Umno today.

Welcoming the recent decision taken by the disciplinary board to curb the menace, he said: "I would like to suggest that corporate people should not be allowed to enter politics. If they are interested in business, they should be groomed to become real corporate people.

"Groom them to become very powerful businessmen."

Aziz said money politics, which is now threatening to weaken the party, was introduced into Umno by the corporate people in the 1970s.

"The problem is Umno members today would only work when there are monetary rewards," he lamented.

The veteran Umno member was also critical of the support given to erratic Malay businessmen.

Aziz said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had done all he could to increase equity of the Malays in the country's economy.

"The Government has given 'pink forms' to Bumiputeras, established Amanah Saham Bumiputera, Mara and Tabung Haji ... what else can we do to help the Malay corporate people.

"I think the Malay corporate people, if we want to help them, we can help them for the first time.

"If they still have difficulties, we help them for the second time. If they still could not do it, we should stop helping them."

Aziz also called for a scrutiny of the background of Malays who could be groomed for the corporate world.

He said past mistakes should not be repeated where certain people who were groomed by the party created problems for the community.

"One Malay businessman whom we groomed went overseas and married a foreign personality and there's one who divorced his wife and paid her millions of ringgit in alimony."

Aziz was confident that Barisan Nasional would win the next general election although some sceptics feel the coalition would be facing "difficulties" in view of the party's internal problems and the growing strength of the opposition in certain States.

Asked whether Umno candidates rejected in the last election would be accepted by the voters if they were fielded in the next elections, Aziz said the party should look for new faces.

"I also suggest that Umno Assemblymen are allowed to serve two terms at the most, except for those who really perform. Assemblymen who perform well should be allowed to continue ... even to the level of a Minister.

"We don't need Assemblymen who don't bring change. There are many others who want to go up and if we don't allow them to, they will find other ways. That's why Umno is having many problems."

Aziz also pointed out the weaknesses of the Umno information bureau in educating members and creating awareness among the public on the party's

struggle.

"It doesn't give adequate explanation on the party's struggle. Umno has a national information chief. It also has information chiefs at State liaison committees, divisions and branches but they have never explained to the people what Umno is all about."