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Abdullah-Power

POLITICAL EXPERIMENT CAN LEAD TO DESTRUCTION, SAYS ABDULLAH

KUALA LUMPUR, June 17 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has reminded the Malays to refrain from indiscriminately attempting to replace the Umno-led government with another party as this may result in a political crisis leading to foreign intervention.

The Umno deputy president said that this could happen as the Malay community would not have a viable alternative to replace Umno which has the experience and maturity in leading a government that has the confidence of its citizens comprising different races, religions and cultures.

"Implementing an effective formula for power-sharing is not something that we can gamble with by experimenting," he said when opening simultaneously the annual assemblies of the Wanita Umno, Pemuda Umno and Puteri Umno at the Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) here tonight.

Abdullah, who is deputy prime minister, said that the country would face grave danger if it was turned into a political laboratory to experiment with a new political formula.

"Such an acid test may result in an explosion, which, if wrongly handled, can lead to destruction," he said.

Abdullah said that any turmoil on Malaysia's soil would only open the doors and provide justification for foreign intervention, to seize the opportunity to interfere in the affairs of other sovereign nations.

Umno is the dominant party of the Barisan Nasional, formerly the Alliance, a coalition of 14 component parties representing the various races, ruling the country since independence.

The annual assemblies of the three movements precede the three-day 57th Umno general assembly which begins on Thursday.

In his address themed "Managing Success", Abdullah said that Umno's political power must be preserved because the Malays were not yet resilient enough, were small in number, were still not in the forefront, were not even on par with other races in achievements in knowledge, skills, commerce, economy and other fields.

"Do not let your guard down just because the Malays dominate the government and the civil service. Do not for a moment think that Malay political power will last forever," he said.

Abdullah said that he was worried that success had spoilt and undermined the mindset of the Malays to the extent that they now think they were secure and could do just about anything they wanted.

According to him, their nationalist spirit had flagged and their capacity to meet challenges had declined, their political power diminishing because of disunity.

"The Malays seek security through political power, but because of disunity, Malay political power is not as resilient as before," he said.

He warned that if the Malays do not face this issue uncompromisingly, and, if they were not brave enough in putting a stop to it, one day, the power that Umno has and with it the power that the Malays benefit from, would be forever gone.

Abdullah said that he fully understood the concerns of Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad that the Malays today do not prioritise unity, allowing anything to divide them like jostling for position in the party, unfounded accusations against the leadership, disappointment or not receiving business opportunities and incitement by opposition parties

He said that they were not only disposed towards being divided but were

even willing to collaborate with the enemies to thwart the Malay struggle.

Abdullah said that the current global environment requires the people to be united, possessing one spirit and wielding one voice when facing the world.

In the midst of these challenging times, he said, the people should be thankful that the nation had remained peaceful and been able to alleviate the people's hardship in facing any political turbulence and economic gloom.

He said that this gratitude should be reflected in their display of strong allegiance and loyalty to the nation.

To the civil servants, he said, it should be presented in the determination to improve the provision of quality and people-friendly services to the public.

To the private sector, he said, it should be demonstrated in improving their competitiveness and productivity.

To the students and undergraduates, he said, it should be shown by excelling in their studies and to the younger generation, it should be displayed through the practice of noble values and a responsibility to themselves and their families.

At the same time, he reminded Umno members not to forget that Umno was formed to unite the Malays and to safeguard and champion their interests.

He said: "Umno is not a racetrack for its members to scurry in pursuit of power so much so that rank and position becomes the embodiment of their struggle...individual survival is given priority over the community's survival. Contests are seen as an opportunity to obtain personal benefit.

"The privilege of voting is valued in monetary terms. Remember, the candidate who is willing to pay for votes has also been funded by others.

"A candidate who tries to influence delegates to sell their soul has himself already sold his soul and dignity," he said.

Abdullah said that jostling for power had resulted in the end justifying the means and, time and again, caused party unity to be forsaken and Malay unity allowed to dilapidate in the pursuit of position.

To ensure Umno's survival, Abdullah said that Umno members must be courageous enough to eliminate the tendencies that may have led the people to be contemptuous of Umno.

He said that it was a greater burden to have to confront such narrow and small-minded party members than to fight opposition parties.

"These members are a burden to us when we go into the general election. These members caused us to lose seats to the opposition," he said.

He called on Umno members to learn a lesson from the downfall of political parties around the world due to, among others, abuse of power, corrupt practices and the pursuit of personal gain, causing them the loss of power and the loss of support.

Abdullah cited the fall of the Congress Party of India, the Kuomintang Nationalist Party in Taiwan and the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan.

He was however proud that Umno had continued to prevail after 57 years because the majority of its members have pure intentions, possess noble values, and sincere in pursuing a struggle that was righteous.

"The majority of Umno members think rationally and place the interest of the party above all else...the majority of Umno members are virtuous and accept Allah's divine determination," he said.

He said that Umno, which has implemented innumerable development programmes and carried out its responsibility to fulfil the agenda of independence, should therefore not be rejected by the people.

Abdullah said that the people were now inheriting a nation whose people were united, whose political environment was stable, whose economy was prosperous, equipped with modern and sophisticated infrastructure.

He said that the wisdom of the Malay leadership has made Umno a party that was respected, credible and widely accepted in the political and democratic system of the country.

In fulfilling its agenda to champion the fate of the Malays, he said, Umno's pragmatic approach had instilled confidence among the other races who continue to feel secure as long as Umno leads the country.

He said that when the courts ruled that Umno was an unlawful organisation in 1988, it was not only the Malays but also non-Malay based political parties that were filled with anxiety and apprehension.

Umno's struggle, he said, strikes a balance between its responsibilities in this world and the hereafter.

He said that Umno has proven that it was fair and just to all Malaysians and never been extremist or narrow and small-minded in its interpretation of policies for the community.

Abdullah said that the elevation of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as chairman of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was a symbol of respect for Malaysians, for the country, and also for Umno.

He said that Umno was exceptionally proud because the prime minister was a son of Umno.

He bloomed and blossomed in the Umno garden, where he displayed his potential and honed his leadership skills, learned and tasted the bitterness of drawbacks and the sweetness of success, braved the storms of trial and tribulation, sharpened his understanding of the struggle, pressed forward step by step, rose, fell and rose again, to eventually become Umno president, prime minister, an outstanding and exceptional statesman and a leader of international standing.

Abdullah said that the confidence and support that Umno enjoys did not come easy.

"There was no magic lamp that was rubbed that could, in the blink of an eye, give us the support we enjoy today.

"At the same time, the support we enjoy and the confidence placed in us will erode only through our own actions, our own deeds, and our own pronouncements that do not get the blessings of the people.

"Beware! If Umno members get too comfortable, the confidence and support will not last for eternity," he said.

He also called on Umno members to look into the future of Umno and the challenges it faces on the long road towards realising its struggle.

He warned that all the successes would not last if Umno members and the people were too quickly satisfied and become complacent and forgetful.

"It is our responsibility to preserve and to improve on our successes," he said.

Abdullah said that the people must be able to look ahead with a broad vision to see everything with a global perspective.

"We must improve our mind's capacity. We must enhance our competitiveness to ensure that we can expand on our accomplishments. We must build our spiritual strength to defend our cultural and national identity against the challenges brought by globalisation.

"We should enhance our resilience to guard against influences that may divert our focus away from the foundation and aims of our struggle. We must strengthen unity among members of the party, among the Malays and among Malaysians," he said.

"Believe me, that if our purpose and our belief in the struggle is pure and sincere, is clear and good, is virtuous and honourable, then we will certainly be able to manage the successes we are inheriting and build upon them," he added.

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