

Leaders say freedom in Umno 'alive and thriving'
Malaysiakini.com
August 4, 2011

Freedom of speech and expression is alive and thriving in Umno, party leaders at various levels said today.

They were refuting a statement by former minister and the party supreme council member Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir that Umno no longer allowed for differences of opinion.

According to him, the lead party in the BN had moved away from the policies practised by past Umno presidents like Tunku Abdul Rahman and Abdul Razak Hussein.

On social websites, some Umno supporters are challenging him to leave the party and criticise Umno as an outsider like Dr Mahathir Mohamad did when Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was prime minister and Umno president.

Umno deputy permanent chairman Mohamed Aziz said that Umno had never stopped its members from voicing their views.

"We are free to speak. I respect him, but he should not criticise just because he is no longer in the mainstream of the party," Mohamed said.

Mohamed, who is Sri Gading Umno division leader, said he was among the more vocal of members, and had never been warned, threatened or pressured for that.

His sweeping statement not accurate

"During the supreme council meetings, there have been heated exchanges. Is this not a form of freedom of expression?" he said.

Umno supreme council member Mustapha Yaakub said that Abdul Kadir was making a sweeping statement that was not accurate.

He said the recent divisional meetings showed just how free Umno members were to give their views.

Division members had spoken their minds and made radical demands which they wanted the top leadership to hear, said Mustapha who is chairman of the veteran Umno international bureau.

Puteri Umno chief Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin said that Abdul Kadir was giving his personal views and they did not reflect the real situation in Umno.

Kota Belud member of parliament Abdul Rahman Dahlan regarded Abdul Kadir's statement as "hasty" and "baseless".

He suggested that Abdul Kadir open his own blog to get feedback on his views.

"What I fear is that after reading the comments in his blog, he would be the first person to ask the prime minister to curb freedom of speech in the country," he added.

- Bernama