

## **Muhyiddin: Time for Umno to do or die**

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It is now the last call for Umno to buck up or become irrelevant, and party leaders who stand in the way of its rejuvenation should leave, said Umno deputy president Muhyiddin Yassin.

"Do or die! Don't place your own interests above the party's interests. I wish to remind myself and Umno leaders of all levels that if we have become a hindrance to the party's rejuvenation, then we should step down honourably.

"Our party must maintain relevance so that the Malay race is protected. The self is unimportant, what is important is the Malays and Umno," he said at the opening of its Wanita's, Pemuda's, and Puteri's wing general assemblies.

Previously, in the run-up to the Umno general assembly, many Umno leaders including party president Najib Abdul Razak, had slammed Umno leaders who kept youths from joining the party in a bid to secure their own positions.

Other salient points from Muhyiddin's speech:

Seven steps proposed to improve the party's appeal to youths, including creating youth leaders who are capable opinion leaders, seeking out young talents to join as active members of the party, and holding more volunteer programs for the people.

Umno members should not be concerned with the party hierarchy, so that they can voice their own views without keeping an eye on their seniors, and avoid the image that Umno is a feudal party.

Accusations that the New Economic Policy (NEP) is backward, drives away investment and causes brain drain is untrue, and are only accusations hurled by haters. Studies including those articulated in Khazanah Research Institute research director Muhammed Abdul Khalid's book *The Colour of Inequality*, shows that it benefited all races and improved incomes. Nevertheless, 'leakages' have caused it to fall short of its goals.

Studies have also shown that Malay graduates are less likely than equally qualified Chinese Malaysian graduates to be called for a job interview in the private sector even with the same qualifications, and receive lower pay. Most (70.3 percent) of the unemployed are also Malays, including 66.9 percent of all unemployed graduates.

The Bumiputera Agenda needs to be raised as a national agenda and not a racial one, because it cannot be executed in isolation from the rest of the economy and needs to cut across all economic sectors.

A new 'National Economic Policy' is also needed to ensure income equality. Among others,

there should be needs-based affirmative action policies for the bottom 40 percent income earners regardless of race.

The practice of lodging police reports and holding protests is no longer an adequate answer to challenges against Islam such as liberalism and secularism.

Intellectual discourse on human rights and freedom from the perspective of Islam is needed instead of emotive responses, while Islamic institutions, NGOs, among others, need to be strengthened.

· The Sedition Act needs to be retained with some amendments to counter prejudice in Malaysian society. These amendments include provisions barring people from questioning the position of Islam as the religion of the federation, the right of non-Muslims to practice their respective religions, the status of Malay reserve land, and maintaining the Royal Malay Regiment.

Umno had been called as racists when championing Malay rights or Islam, but other races or non-Muslims are not called likewise when defending their kin. This has gone to the extent of Umno being portrayed as the oppressor, despite its contributions for the country.