

**'Elegant' silence greets KJ's policy speech**  
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Delegates at the Umno Youth general assembly today showed little interest in its leader Khairy Jamaluddin's call for the movement to tread the middle path in communal politics and embrace inclusiveness.

Breaking away from Umno Youth's usual brand of racial posturing and firebrand rhetoric, Khairy had earlier warned that the party could not survive on Malay votes alone and must make itself appealing to non-Malays.

He warned that since there is no party that commands the predominance of Malay votes, the party could not ignore non-Malay voters and that 50 Parliament seats held by the party would be at risk if they did so.

While calling on the youth wing to be at the forefront in championing Malay interest, he also urged members to engage the non-Malays and display understanding and empathy.

He also broached the touchy subject of reviewing the New Economic Policy, which he said was not amounting to "treachery", an idea held by certain quarters within the wing.

Khairy argued that a revamp of the affirmative action policy was needed to address leakages and other shortcomings.

Losing the plot?

A cursory look at the media reports on his speech, these points have been widely regarded as the core of his speech.

It was apparent, however, that they aroused little interest from the floor.

The normally boisterous crowd kept to a rapt silence through most of his speech, although Khairy told reporters immediately after that it he was sure delegates accepted his message.

But this was definitely not reflected when 13 delegates took the stage later to debate Khairy's policy speech.

Instead, many delegates went on a mild Pakatan Rakyat-bashing spree, albeit with a noticeable toning down on racial rhetoric in comparison with previous years.

Another recurring theme was improvements for suggestions on the government delivery system and the harping praises for the BN Youth Lab, an outfit which Khairy heads, and its "achievements" in having some of its suggestions included in Budget 2011.

'Syok sendiri' and 'satay culture'

During the winding up speeches, even Khairy's deputy Razali Ibrahim steered clear from his boss' major points from the policy speech.

When it came to Khairy's winding-up speech, the topic was changed altogether.

He went on a 18-minute tirade against what he believes are 10 characteristics of Umno Youth grassroots leaders that must be "dropped".

The 10 characteristics are: elitism, shirking of collective responsibility, being photo opportunist (*masuk frame*), agent provocateurs (*batu api*), the yes men culture, backstabbing, being two-faced (*talam dua muka*), opportunism, '*syok sendiri*', and brown-nosing (*budaya punchcard*).

Among Khairy's more comical explanations was on the topic of batu api, which he explained as satay culture.

"You *cucuk* (skewer) the leader, put him on the stove and you fan the flames," he said, triggering guffaws from the floor.

Khairy also praised the delegates for their "sincere" criticism during the debates which showed that they were not "yes men".

'We're getting there'

As the assembly drew to a close, Khairy was pressed by reporters on the delegates' cold response towards his calls for inclusiveness and review of the NEP.

He insisted that change is slowly but surely taking place.

"You now hear much, much less ethnocentric rhetoric in Umno Youth assembly since I took over, so I'm very happy.

"(Change) is starting to happen. There are some complaints a little bit... like when a delegate spoke about doing more for the Malays and there were muted response. It's change taking place before your eyes.

"When a leader is doing something, it'll take some time to get there, but we'll accept and it's certainly better than not doing anything at all."

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