

Abdullah: Malays still back Umno
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Syed Jaymal Zahiid

If PAS and PKR think they're ahead of Umno when it comes to gaining Malay support, they're wrong, charged Umno president and Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today. MCPX

umno 62 anniversary 110508 abdullah speech
Abdullah in his keynote address to some 1,000 Umno members attending a ceremony to commemorate the party's 62nd anniversary told his audience not to be discouraged by the March 8 polls results. He reminded his party members that Umno was still very much in control.

"You all must remember that Umno and BN has won every general elections throughout the country's history and the aftermath of the March 8 polls saw us forming the federal government once again," said Abdullah.

He added that despite the unprecedented electoral setback that saw Umno and BN losing its two-thirds parliamentary majority, Umno had nevertheless outrun its Pakatan Rakyat counterpart when it comes to Malay support.

"Remember that Umno won 79 seats (out of 140) and if you combine the seats won by PAS and PKR, they are still behind us," stressed Abdullah.

Abdullah remained adamant that Umno was still very much the favourite Malay party as compared to PAS and PKR as reflected through past events that saw the party divisively splintered in three major occasions.

"When Onn Jaafar left Umno to form the National Party, Umno was divided, when Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah left the party to form Semangat 46, Umno was divided.

"When Anwar Ibrahim left Umno and formed PKR, again the party was divided. But look at us now, we are still here and still very strong. We have succeeded these tests," said Abdullah.

Umno made mistakes

umno 62 anniversary 110508 crowd
The poor performance of BN in the elections, he conceded, must however be accepted as the public had made it clear to the party that it was not living up to the people's expectations.

"We have ears and eyes. The people accused us of being arrogant and all that (but) we as their leaders must understand that we have vowed to care for them and that is what we shall continue to do," noted Abdullah.

He also said that there were various reasons that caused Umno and BN to flunk in the popularity test, spotting internal division, party bureaucracy and the emergence of a new generation of opinionated youth voters as possible reasons behind the setback.

"Umno Youth and Puteri must approach the young ones. They are the future of the country

and will be the wave that will continue the party struggle. Do not isolate them," he stressed.

"Internal division must be reconciled democratically. I know that (BN) voters have voted for the opposition, that they have isolated us but we must come out of this and consolidate the party now," advised Abdullah.

umno 62 anniversary 110508 first roll standHe also appealed that no Umno member should be caught "being dragged to the court for corruption charges" and reminded them to perform their duties with unquestionable integrity.

Closing his half-an-hour speech, Abdullah shrugged off allegations that Umno was a Malay chauvinist party and said that Umno not only strived to better the well-being of the Malays but also of the non-Malays as well.

Other BN party component leaders like Gerakan's Koh Tsu Koon and United Sarawak Party's Abdul Taib Mahmud were present at the event which lasted for two hours.

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