

Khairy: Go back to basics

Malays urged to take control of halal food industry

The Star - 11/3/2007

KUALA LUMPUR: Some 80% of the *halal* food industry in the country is controlled by non-Muslims, said Umno Youth deputy chief Khairy Jamaluddin.

This was because they were already in control of food-based industries and, hence, it was easy to get the *halal* certification for their products.

Pointing out that even non-Malay banks had ventured into Islamic banking, he said the Malays could not take for granted that the *halal* domain was theirs for the taking.

"Just because you are a Malay it does not necessarily mean that you will succeed in industries synonymous with the Malays and Muslims," he said, urging them to go back to the basics and take control of the food industry.

Khairy was speaking at the *Kongress Jihad Ekonomi* (Economic Struggle Congress) organised by Gagasan Badan Ekonomi Melayu (Gabem), Umno Youth and Yayasan Dakwah Islamiyah Malaysia.

He also criticised Bank Pertanian over its Fund-for-Food scheme, where borrowers had to put 60% of the loan obtained in fixed deposit as collateral.



Resolutions: Umno Youth chief Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein (centre) receiving the congress' resolutions from Gabem chairman Tan Sri Rahim Tamby Chik while Khairy looks on in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"This does not make sense. This means 60% will be inaccessible if you have to put it in fixed deposits.

"Why borrow in the first place?" he asked.

"You might as well borrow 40% of the money elsewhere," he said.

He added that he had heard of and came across many such cases, citing an entrepreneur who wanted to borrow RM1mil from the bank to start a dragon fruit farm in Johor.

He said under the bank's condi-

tion, RM600,000 of that RM1mil would have to remain in fixed deposits.

"So the entrepreneur decided against the bank loan and borrowed the money from friends instead."

On the proposed Free Trade Agreement with the United States, Khairy said Umno Youth opposed it in the current form, assuming that the agreement follows those the United States had signed with other

countries, like Singapore and Jordan.

He said Umno Youth believed the United States would not sign anything that was different from what they had already signed with others.

"Our worry is the local economy. If the United States has a non-negotiable list, we must also have a non-negotiable list on government procurement, the New Economic Policy and agriculture.

"Otherwise there shouldn't be an agreement," he said.