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Abdullah: We don't want Anwar back



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GEORGE TOWN: Barisan Nasional chairman and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi slammed the doors shut on former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim yesterday, saying Umno does not want him back.

"He is not important to me, he is not important to Umno and we don't want him," said Abdullah, speaking at a rally of more than 10,000 people in the Chinese-majority heartland of Rifle Range Flats in Air Hitam here.

Abdullah said he did not want to dwell too much on Anwar as the speaker preceding him, former Gerakan president Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik, had spoken at length about Anwar's characteristics and qualities when the Parti Keadilan Rakyat de facto leader was in BN for 17 years (see page 4).

"He (Anwar) wanted to come back but we said no. We have enough leaders in Umno and we do not need him.

"Now, he has to look for friends in DAP and Pas. They are just an alliance of convenience."

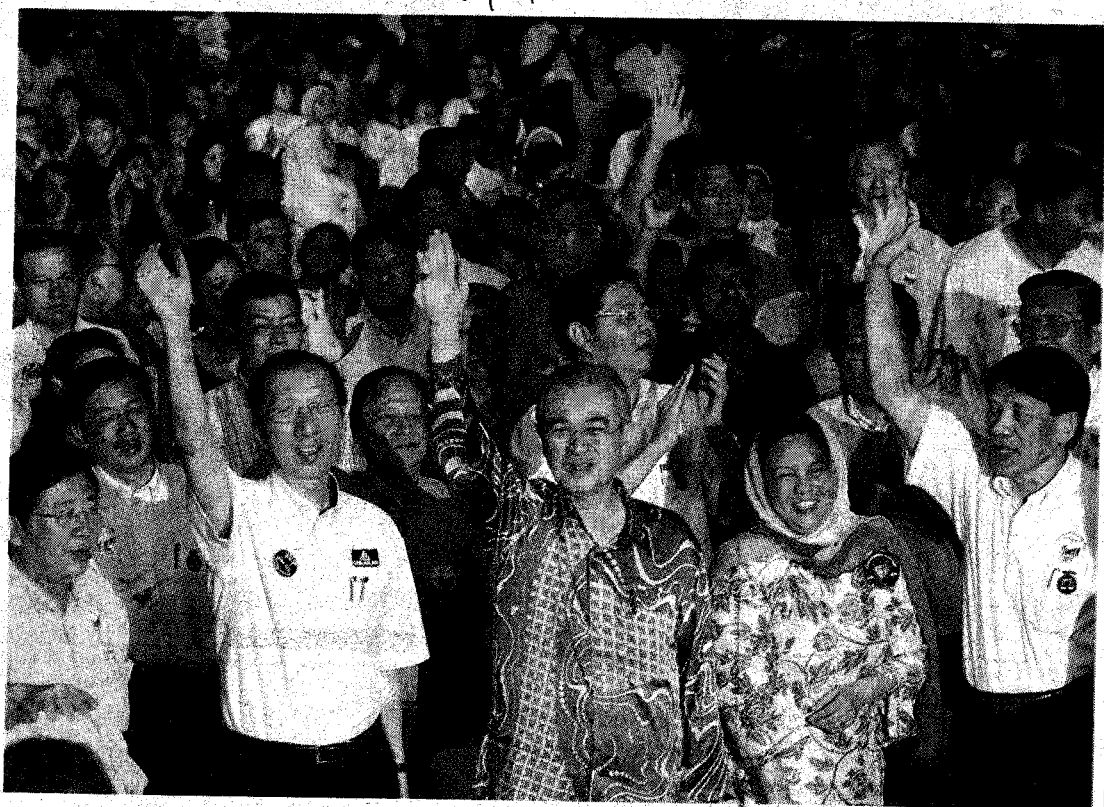
Abdullah has refrained from attacking Anwar despite Anwar's incessant attacks and allegations against him, his family, his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Razak and his colleagues over the last two years.

Abdullah said it was clear from the experiences of those in the government and from statements made by Anwar's former allies in PKR that the PKR leader "says different things to different people for his own selfish gain".

"He is making promises because he knows he can never form a government.

"But we can and will deliver because we have a genuine partnership in BN," he told the cheering crowd.

Abdullah cautioned voters in Penang that the so-called opposi-



Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (centre) and his wife Datin Paduka Seri Jeanne Abdullah (second from right) waving to the crowd during the rally at the Rifle Range Flats in Air Hitam, Penang last night. With them are Chief Minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon (second from left), Datuk Chia Kwang Chye (left) and Datuk Dr Teng Hock Nan (right). — NST picture by Fariz Iswadi Ismail

tion alliance was playing to racial sentiments and this could only be divisive.

"We want the people to be united so that we can, together, shoulder the responsibility of ensuring the country's progress," he said.

The prime minister said the opposition, in its campaign, goes to the Indian community and tells them that they should not support Umno because it will become a problem if the Malays are strong.

"When people in Umno hear this, they become angry and say they do not want to support the Indians," he said.

In a rare moment of anger, Abdullah said: "This is stupid politics. They want to destroy the MIC."

Abdullah said DAP claimed it

was not a race-based party but the fact was it could not attract other races to support it except for the Chinese.

"And every time they use the race issue, MCA suffers because we in BN are committed to multi-racialism and power-sharing among the races."

He reminded voters in Penang that in 1990, using the same racial politics, DAP ensured that MCA and MIC lost all their seats, leaving Umno, with 12 seats, and Gerakan, with seven seats, forming the government.

"Remember this — it was not Umno or the Malays who put the Chinese in a difficult position, it was DAP that did it because of its racial politics. I cannot accept this."

Abdullah said there were calls by some Umno members for an Umno man to be made the chief minister because of its majority.

"But we have an understanding in BN. Since Penang is a Chinese-majority state, it is only logical for a Chinese to become the chief minister. We stood by this agreement," he said.

"This is what a true partnership and alliance means. We are a genuine alliance. The fact that Umno did not take over the chief minister's post shows the party is not greedy."

"We are not chameleons," Abdullah said, referring to Keng Yaik's description of Anwar.

"We only say what we really mean."