

Chorus of approval as PM sings the Umno song at general assembly

KUALA LUMPUR: The sight of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim singing the Umno song along with delegates at the party's general assembly was met with roaring approval.

Party members outside the Dewan Merdeka cheered when they saw the Prime Minister on the screen as he shared the stage with Umno leaders, singing and waving the party flag yesterday.

"Dia nyanyilah! (He's singing)," said an amused Umno Wanita member. Another was thrilled that Anwar still knew the lyrics to the song. "He still remembers the Umno song."

Kuala Terengganu Umno committee member Mohd Hanafiah Ismail described Anwar's presence as meaningful, saying he was already a party member when the latter was sacked from Umno in 1998.

"I never expected to see him in Dewan Merdeka again. I am glad that this has happened," he added.

Anwar was Umno's deputy president before he was sacked from the party in September 1998.

The crowd at the general assembly was equally thrilled when they saw Warisan president Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal sing the party's anthem. He is also no stranger to Umno; he was one of the three vice-presidents before he left the party in 2016.

When approached by the press, Anwar, who is Pakatan Harapan chairman and PKR president, said it might have been 25 years since he left, but the lyrics of the party song remained fresh. "I still remember the lyrics. I memorised the song by heart," he said.

Anwar said he decided to attend the Umno assembly as he hoped to use it as a platform to further strengthen the unity government for the benefit of the rakyat.

"What is important is to facilitate my duty to the nation. My experience is important, but it cannot overshadow the interest of the rakyat and nation. I feel comfortable and at ease because I am used to the atmosphere here," he said.

Earlier, Anwar received a standing ovation from Umno delegates after the party's permanent chairman Tan Sri Badruddin Amiruddin described him as an old friend who had returned to where he embarked on his political journey.

"It was in this hall where he soared as one of the nation's respectful leaders," Badruddin said in his speech before inviting the crowd to give Anwar a standing ovation.

Also invited as guests of honour were several leaders of the unity government, including Gabungan Parti Sarawak parliamentary chief whip Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, DAP secretary-general Anthony Loke, Amanah president Datuk Seri Mohamad Sabu, Amanah deputy president Datuk Seri Salahuddin Ayub and Upko president Datuk Ewon Benedick.