

'GIVI US FULL TERM'

'BACK ANWAR TO ENSURE STABILITY'

Govt's focus is to boost economy and create better jobs, says DPM

FUAD NIZAM
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

CONTINUED support for Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is crucial for Malaysia's political stability and economic growth, said Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi.

He said political stability would enable the country to attract more foreign direct investments, bolster economic growth, and create a stronger foundation for future development.

"This government must be maintained until the next election for the benefit of the people. Our focus must be on ensuring a stable political environment.

"The government's primary objective is to improve economic stability, eradicate extreme poverty and provide better opportunities for Malaysians," he said on *Podcast Utama Buletin Utama*, aired on TV3 yesterday.

All parties, he said, must accept the coalition put together after the 15th General Election to form the unity government.

Zahid also dismissed claims of

being the "master of political operations" behind Umno and the unity government's strategic decisions.

He said all decisions, whether at the party or cabinet level, were through consensus.

"Who am I to be the 'master of political operation' or the 'political master' in all of this?"

"What matters is unity and the need to embrace differences of opinion while ensuring decisions are made through consensus.

"Decision-making involves certain methods, and when looking for agreement, we must agree to disagree.

"This must be handled appropriately," Zahid said.

FROM RIVALS TO ALLIES

Zahid said the unity government's resilience was due to the understanding and compatibility between parties that were once fierce political rivals.

"It is not easy to maintain this cooperation. The prime minister and I have known each other for almost 40 years, dating back to our time in Umno.

"I was the Umno Youth chief while he was the Umno deputy president before being dismissed in 1998," he said.

Zahid also dismissed allegations that DAP opposed Islamic and Malay agendas in the government.

"In cabinet meetings, DAP secretary-general Anthony Loke sits to my right.

"Over the past 25 months, I



Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi (to Anwar's right) with other unity government leaders standing behind Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim at the Unity Government National Convention in Kuala Lumpur on May 14, 2023. NSTP FILE PIC

have never seen any opposition from DAP towards Islamic and Malay agendas in the cabinet," he said.

He added that when the Bumiputera Economic Congress was held, Digital Minister Gobind Singh Deo from DAP was a committee member and never opposed any resolution.

Zahid acknowledged that every party, including Umno, had "loose cannons" who made statements that did not align with the party's stance.

He hoped that the compatibility built over the past 25 months would continue until the government completed its term.

TVET TO DRIVE WORKFORCE

The Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system, said Zahid, was emerging as a "transformative alternative" for students seeking employment and higher education.

Zahid, who chairs 27 cabinet committees, including the one overseeing TVET, said the government had significantly increased its investment in the sector, allocating RM7.5 billion this year compared with last year's RM6.8 billion.

"This funding supports TVET programmes across 12 ministries, covering 1,398 institutions nationwide.

"It is a critical shift in our education ecosystem, moving beyond conventional academic pathways towards industry-driven skill development," he said.

The new TVET framework, he said, integrated science, technology, engineering and mathematics education while offering students credentials equivalent to traditional qualifications.

"TVET institutions award the Malaysian Skills Certificate, where Level 3 is equivalent to the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), and Level 5 is on a par with a diploma.

"This ensures that students who do not take the conventional academic route still have viable career prospects," he said.

Zahid said there were six TVET universities in Malaysia — including Universiti Kuala Lumpur, Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka, and Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia — which offered higher education in technical expertise.

Addressing concerns about the 10,162 SPM candidates who did not sit the examination, Zahid said TVET was an option for these students to get qualifications and enter the workforce.

"Employability among TVET graduates is exceptionally high. The national average stands at 94.5 per cent, while institutions

under Mara report an even higher rate of 98.7 per cent.

"Many students secure jobs before they even complete their studies," he said.

He also dismissed the perception that TVET was only for students who struggled academically, noting that graduates often earned higher salaries than degree-holders due to their specialised skills.

LAND ACT AMENDMENT

Zahid said the government would amend the Land Act (Group Settlement Areas) to streamline rules and allow more than one house to be built per Felda lot, to ease the housing crunch faced by second-, third- and fourth-generation settlers.

Zahid, who is also rural and regional development minister, said there were 317 Felda land lots linked to about 120,000 settlers of various generations.

He said the Act was last amended 20 years ago and needed to be updated to meet current needs.

"Some states have begun allowing more than one house to be built per lot.

"Tenaga Nasional Bhd has also agreed to supply electricity to these additional houses.

"We plan to streamline these rules via the amendment, which would be tabled by year end."