

Umno's Pledge Of Loyalty A Historic Occasion
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KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 10 (Bernama) -- The 2011 Umno General Assembly last week created history of its own as 5,447 delegates from 191 divisions pledged their loyalty and allegiance to the party.

There were two pledges made, in fact. The first was on Nov 30 during the presidential briefing in front of party president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and the second was at the end of the assembly on Dec 3, led by deputy president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

The pledge spelled out their commitment to stand united and work hard for the party as well as to remain loyal to the party and its leaders and ensure the victory of Umno and Barisan Nasional candidates in the coming general election.

There had been talks that the pledge was necessary to reinforce the importance of loyalty among party members to the party.

Najib, in his winding up speech at the end of the assembly, had stressed that the defeat of many of Umno's candidates in the 12th general election in 2008 was due to betrayal by some party members.

Political analyst Prof Dr Ahmad Atory Hussain said a pledge cannot be taken for granted because it would have a major implications in their lives as Muslims.

"When it is a 'bai'ah' (pledge) it has something to do with religion. Meaning, if we go against our pledge, we will incur the wrath of Allah. Don't play around with bai'ah," he said.

He said the pledge would bind party members to remain loyal to the party and prevent any incident of sabotage in the coming election.

It would also help unite party members and strengthen the party ahead of the polls, he said.

He added however that apart from pledging loyalty, it was also important for Umno to take into consideration other factors to ensure victory, such as recognising the contributions of those who had served the party.

"Don't leave them out in the cold. If this is taken care of, I think there will be no element of sabotage in Umno," he said.

There have also been talks that party members at all branches and divisions, totalling 3.2 million, should also similarly pledge their loyalty and allegiance, something which political analyst Che Hamdan Mohamed Razali said should be done to reflect their total commitment to the party.

"The pledge binds an individual to the party and the struggles for the race, religion and country. But if the intention to join a party is to get projects and posts, then a pledge would

have little meaning.

"The loyalty pledge is timely and it will also be able to stamp out protest votes if they truly appreciate their expression of loyalty," said Che Hamdan, a political science lecturer at Universiti Teknologi Mara, Dungun campus.

He added that his observations throughout the years showed that the attitude of selected candidates -- such as being disrespectful to the previous ones -- also contributed to the defeat of Umno candidates in certain areas.

"It's better that loyalty is pledged much earlier so that those who are not chosen as candidates will accept the decision and support the new ones for the sake of the party," he said.

Umno Youth executive council member Datuk Pirdaus Ismail described the pledge led by Muhyiddin as a reminder to all party members to get their priorities right ahead of the coming election, dubbed as the most challenging yet for the party.

He said a person should be sincere in pledging his loyalty.

"The pledge is for good things. If they reject it, that means they reject things that are good. Whether that constitutes a sin, only Allah knows," said the former imam of the national mosque.

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