

Azmin says PKR can replace 'morally bankrupt' Umno
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By Shannon Teoh

JOHOR BARU, Nov 25 — PKR deputy president Azmin Ali said today his party is ready to lead Malaysia and replace what he called a “morally bankrupt” Umno that has betrayed the public’s trust.

The Gombak MP said, in his keynote address at the launch of the party’s Youth and women’s wing national congress, that “Umno has even become anti-Malay.”

“It is an old party that is anti-democratic, anti-intellectual, anti-human rights, anti-worker and full of political slander and corruption. Keadilan will lead Malaysia without Umno,” he told over 1,600 delegates.

Azmin delivers his speech at the PKR congress on November 25, 2011. — Picture by Choo Choy May
He said Umno has “cultivated slavery and failed to build the spirit of independence.”

Azmin cited the detention without trial of 13 people in Sabah under the Internal Security Act (ISA) two weeks ago despite Datuk Seri Najib Razak promising to repeal the law as proof that “Umno’s political transformation has failed.”

He also said “Umno has no intention to ensure the young are critical and think freely” as Najib’s administration has proposed in Parliament to criminalise peaceful demonstrations and bar students under the age of 21 from political activity.

“Freedom and courage to think is the enemy of Umno. While the Arab Spring gains momentum, over here we are being threatened with a Malaysian Winter,” he said, referring to the series of street protests in the Middle East earlier this year that toppled governments in Egypt, Tunisia and Libya.

He called the prime minister’s recent endorsement of pro-BN cybertroopers a “declaration of war” against Pakatan Rakyat (PR) to “ensure their hegemony continues.”

Azmin, who is also the party’s election director, said he will push for more young candidates to be fielded in a general election expected soon to counter Najib’s Social Media Convention last week which “shows the government’s desperation to claim the support of young voters.”

According to statistics drawn from last year’s census, those aged under 40 make up 47 per cent of the current voting population of just under 16 million.

The young also make up the majority of Malaysia’s 11.3 million Facebook users as of the middle of this year.

Umno president Najib proposed earlier this week a Peaceful Assembly Bill which Opposition Leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said will prevent his coalition from conducting ceramahs and gatherings.

While the Bill removes the need for a police permit and jail sentences, it also bars street protests and public gatherings from various public areas including petrol stations, hospitals, fire stations, airports, railways, places of worship and schools.

The prime minister also said yesterday the government plans to amend the controversial section 15 of the Universities and University Colleges Act (UUCA) to allow students above 21 to be active members of political parties.

In a majority 2-1 judgment, a three-man panel of judges ruled earlier this month that Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) had breached Article 10 of the country's highest law when it disciplined four students involved in a political campaign last year under section 15(5)(a) of the UUCA.

Section 15(5)(a) states: "No student of the University and no organisation, body or group of students of the University which is established by, under or in accordance with the Constitution, shall express or do anything which may reasonably be construed as expressing support for or sympathy with or opposition to any political party, whether in or outside Malaysia".

But Azmin said the move was hypocritical and "if the prime minister is sincere, why is he appealing against the court's decision in the UKM4 case?"

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