

Umno's Rejuvenation Process Should Also Focus On Young Professionals

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KUALA LUMPUR, May 16 (Bernama) -- Umno's three-day, 66th Anniversary celebrations last week received tremendous response from the younger generation, which proved Umno's rejuvenation process is picking up.

About 70 per cent of the 250,000 of those who attended were youths, refuting allegations made by the opposition who claim Umno has now 'wilted' due to poor support from the younger generation.

According to the Dean of the Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies at Universiti Teknologi Mara, Prof Datuk Dr Ramlah Adam, although Umno had received support from the younger generation, the party should give room for participation to young professionals who were described as "determinants of Umno's political strength".

He said that although youth voters should not be over emphasised by Umno in its rejuvenation process, this particular group of young professionals aged 45 and above was considered critical as a majority of them tend to be fence sitters or leaning towards the opposition.

"The focus should be on this group of individuals as they would be key to determining the strength of the government in the future," he told Bernama here, today.

Ramlah said that Umno would be at a loss if this group of professionals and intellectuals were 'won over' by the opposition following Umno's failure to 'grab' them first.

Umno should refrain from 'unfriendly' behaviour towards this group, and the perception that criticisms from these young professionals showed a total rejection of Umno should be changed, she said.

She said this was because the criticisms might be borne out of love for the party as well.

"It is not as if all are not aware of Umno's endeavours all this while. It might be, that the criticism is a form of analysis. They criticise because they care for Umno and want them to improve," she said, adding that the criticisms should be refined by Umno leaders.

Meanwhile, Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Dr Ma'rof Redzuan was of the opinion that the many indoctrinations carried out by the opposition required Umno to change its approach in order to gain respect and belief from the people, especially the younger generation.

Ma'rof said that the personality and quality of a leader who was clean and transparent in all endeavours was the main factor considered by the people in determining Umno's worth, and as such, would determine the party's continuity, especially its ability to face the upcoming 13th General Election.

He said that if those values failed to be highlighted by Umno, the people would continue leaning towards the opposition, who they hoped, would be able to bring the change wanted.

"Following the current trend, the people no longer choose the party, but rather look at the

leader's personality...the one who is people-oriented, transparent, clean and sincere will be chosen.

"Some of the people believe that those values exist in the opposition, although only through idealism, but if Umno doesn't take heed, and continues to appoint leaders whose personalities are tainted, corrupt, or put themselves above the party, it will cause many to lose faith in Umno," he said.

Therefore, according to Ma'rof, Umno cannot be complacent towards those factors to ensure that it continues to be accepted by the people beyond its 66 years so far.

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