

Anwar tells Umno to embrace Abdullah's "wake-up" call
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Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (pic) today hoped that Tun Abdullah Badawi's revelations about Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Umno would lead to a healthy debate in Umno on taboo subjects such as trophy projects as well as nurture a more questioning culture in the ruling party.

"I think it is a healthy situation for Tun Dollah to articulate his views, in some ways defending his position against the incessant attacks particularly from Tun Mahathir.

"So to allow him a forum, I think it would be a healthy situation to have healthy debate. This has been deferred to after the general election because they did not want it to affect party morale," Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim told reporters at a Hari Raya open house in Penang, the Malaysian Chronicle reported.

But he also added: "But knowing Umno, I don't believe they will discuss substantive issues. It is still related to race, projects, pecuniary interests, benefits instead of substantive policy issues because Tun Dollah alluded to the failure to undertake reforms within Umno."

Calling it a failure on Umno's part due to a lack of capacity to understand serious debate on policy issues, the Opposition Leader urged Umno members to engage in such issues.

"Hopefully with the initiative taken by Tun Dollah, with his assessment it would encourage more vibrant debate and questioning of the relevance of a party with obsolete ideas, racism and religious bigotry."

In the book, the 74-year-old Abdullah had hit out at his predecessor and nemesis Dr Mahathir, who ruled Malaysia with an iron grip for 22 years from 1981 - making him the country's longest-serving prime minister so far.

When asked if the book and the timing of its release was a signal from Abdullah that he supported Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's fight to retain the Umno presidency when the party holds its internal polls in October, Anwar declined to give a direct response, the Chronicle reported.

"I don't necessarily share all his views, I am only supporting the need for a healthy vibrant debate which is not encouraged by Umno or which is not a tradition with the Umno-controlled media which is the rule of (character) assassination, propaganda and attack against the Opposition and Opposition leaders.

"For an ex-Umno president to acknowledge the failure of Umno to undertake serious reform, I think this is an issue that must be debated within Umno circles," said Anwar.

Abdullah's book, which contains 35 essays, is set to hit the stands later this month. Anwar's daughter Nurul Izzah, who is also Lembah Pantai MP, is expected to launch the book in Singapore. - August 10, 2013.

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