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Umno-Veep (reaction)

VICE-PRESIDENTS PLEDGE TO CARRY OUT PARTY'S MANDATE

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 10 (Bernama) -- The three Umno vice-presidents elected at the party's general assembly today pledged to carry out the trust and responsibilities placed upon them to the best of their ability and to assist the party in meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

Meanwhile, those who were defeated said they respected the delegates' choice and pledged to continue serving the party and government.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak retained his post by obtaining the highest votes of 1,483, followed by Foreign Minister Datuk Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi with 1,053 votes and Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhamad Taib, who was also returned with 1,045 votes.

The election is for a three-year term until 1999.

Youth and Sports Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin failed to defend his post while Defence Minister Datuk Syed Hamid Albar, Perak Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib and another member Yob Tajuddin Kulub Ismail also lost.

The votes obtained by them, however, were not announced by party permanent chairman Tan Sri Sulaiman Ninam Shah when reading the results. Voting started immediately after Prime Minister and party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had declared open the three-day general assembly.

Dr Mahathir and Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim retained their respective post uncontested.

When approached by reporters after the announcement, Najib pledged to carry out all instructions by party president and deputy president to administer and look after the party to the best of his ability.

He said he will participate in efforts to carry out the process of transforming the culture in Umno as suggested by Dr Mahathir in the president's policy speech.

"I regard this victory as a responsibility placed upon me to lead the Education Ministry and a manifestation of the support for the education reforms being championed," he said.

When asked about Abdullah's victory, Najib said he regarded it as a victory arising from the fine support given by the delegates.

"I am not surprised by the result because the president had indicated the basic principles in the election whereby he wanted certain leaders as (indicated) in his speech," Najib said.

Abdullah, 56, said his victory demonstrated the increased support he had received from delegates compared to the support he had three years ago when he lost in his bid.

When asked whether the president's speech had helped him to a certain extent, Abdullah said: "Maybe...this time the support shown for me had increased right from the beginning unlike previously."

Muhammad, 51, described the contest this time as more intense because of the credible candidates joining the fray.

"I feel the new term is more challenging as we enter the 21st century when Malaysia will be faced with keener competition," he said.

Supporting Dr Mahathir's suggestion for a transformation of the culture, he said Umno had an important task in guiding the Malays to master new technology including the information technology.

"We must prepare for a society that is willing to play a role in the global era," he said.

Muhyiddin said he accepted the result with an open heart because in a

contest there would be winners and losers.

"I respect the choice of the delegates and I will continue to offer whatever services to the party and will remain loyal to the leadership," he added.

He said he would carry out his official duties as usual.

Syed Hamid described the results as a victory for Umno because the delegates had chosen leaders who were good for the party.

"I regard it as a victory for Umno and I accept it in good faith," he added.

Ramli also accepted his defeat with an open heart and was confident that the vice presidents chosen would be able to carry out their task.

"Having left it to the delegates to choose the leaders, we must accept the outcome of the election," he said. -- BERNAMA

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