

Vanquished must support winners, says Dr M

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WINNERS of the Wanita Umno election must close ranks, while the vanquished should support the victors, Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

Congratulating Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil on their victories as the movement's head and deputy chief respectively, Dr Mahathir said he expected all Umno leaders to work hard and safeguard the party.

"Only then can we all say that we are a democracy, that we understand the ways of democracy," he told a Press conference after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the party headquarters.

Asked whether Rafidah's narrow win over incumbent Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman would affect efforts to consolidate Wanita Umno, he said: "I think there will be no problem... it is up to the wisdom of the leadership to get the members to close ranks."

To another question, Dr Mahathir said the election's outcome did not have any bearing on Siti Zaharah's Cabinet position.

"It has nothing to do with her Cabinet post," he said.

Rafidah attended tonight's supreme council meeting in her capacity as Wanita chief. Dr Mahathir also congratulated Datuk Hishammuddin Tun Hussein who won the Umno Youth head post

uncontested.

Asked on what he expected from the Rafidah-Shahrizat combination, he said: "As usual, Umno leaders must work hard and strive for the party's excellence."

He said tonight's meeting discussed preparations for the party's general assembly which would start tomorrow.

"Delegates will debate the presidential speech tomorrow and the day after. As for the motions on religion and economy, we have decided to limit the number of speakers for each motion to six due to time constraints," he said, adding that supreme council members would reply to points raised during the debate on Saturday afternoon.