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An open letter to all the Umno 2000-2003 vice-presidents

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Dear Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd Taib, Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz:

Congratulations on your election as Vice Presidents. You must have had some anxious moments today, especially after the president's speech when he dwelled on issues facing the party today. In highlighting major concerns such as money politics and actions contrary to party objectives, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad did not name names, as I predicted earlier, but he made some references which had caused many to sweat.

Were you surprised at your victory? Your supporters probably aren't. Other candidates would now be joining delegates analysing the results, each coming to their own conclusions. Whatever the case may be, the delegates have made known their preferences, and you will now have to carry out your duties to meet their expectations.

Your election to the party's highest decision-making body comes with heavy responsibilities. You must surely know that. You also know that you are given the members' mandate to manage the party well, enhance its effectiveness and help make it into a force that is respected and loved. I like to believe that your success in the party election is a manifestation of the delegates' trust in you and your principles.

If you had slept little in the past weeks to campaign, then the coming months should be no different. The 2.8 million members, speaking through the delegates, expect no less than excellence from you in discharging your duties. They demand efficiency and fairness from you. Four of you also hold senior Government positions, which means that you have added responsibilities. All of them, it must be said, demand adequate attention from you.

I'm sure the YBs among you won't complain about the extra work. After all, as politicians, you're supposed to thrive on such challenges. Any politician worth his salt would feel small, perhaps even useless, if he has little, or no, responsibilities. But you also know that responsibilities come with expectation.

At this point in time, the members' expectation are high, perhaps as high as when the nation's forefathers were fighting for Merdeka. But you're not alone. Working with the president, and guided by your sense of service and sacrifices in the name of the party's objectives, you should do well. And if you stay true to the basic ideals with which the party was founded 54 years ago, then the probability of success is better, InsyAllah (God willing).

As you reflect the day's proceedings, you must also give serious thought to the days ahead as you try to help consolidate the party, especially after the below-par performance at the last general election. The party has set such high standards at the hustings, that anything less than full marks are often questioned.

Dr Mahathir's advice should be taken into account when you discuss issues facing the party at future deliberations of the supreme council.

But if you wish to truly excel in your job, and in the process enhance the people's perception of the party, then you cannot but lead by example. You must first of all help heal whatever rift that exists, at all levels. You must seek out members who stayed away from the party for one reason or other. You must be clean and be seen to be clean as well; you must always

be prepared to serve, regardless of the time of day.

In trying to discharge your duties, you must always remember that you are accountable to the people and party always. You may spend less time with your families but then again, your extended family is much, much bigger than most people. Your motto must always be "others above self".

Saudara/i, you surely don't need reminders that you are being closely watched and monitored. Your every move and statements would be analysed, each of them will be weighed accordingly when the time comes. You know too that you are there solely at the pleasure of the delegates, some of whom may also harbour hopes that they may take your place at the top one fine day.

Your sincerity or lack of it in dispensing your duties would eventually show too. I don't intend to question your dedication and commitment to the cause (as this is already entrenched in you), but if you shirk your responsibilities, there'll be enough members who will not hesitate to tell you so, in words and deeds, if need be.

Your duties far exceed the boundaries of the party, since Umno is the backbone of the ruling coalition. Your collective leadership will be tested as the country faces the next general election in four or five years' time. This means that you really have little time to rest.

Finally, allow me to congratulate you once again. If this letter offends you in whatever way, please accept my apologies.

My open letter is not intended to raise doubts on your abilities, but I hope you may find some time to reflect on the points I raised.

In the course of our work, our paths may cross from time to time. Perhaps, a chat over teh tarik can give us some time to exchange views and perspectives...

Terima kasih (Thank you).