

Avoid infighting in transition, say Umno's vice-presidents

Nst - 4 JUL 2002

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — A power struggle between Umno's top leaders can precipitate infighting at many levels of Umno which will gradually weaken the party, said Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib.

Thus, he said, Umno leaders and members must heed the advice by party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and return to the party's original struggle without attaching importance to individuals.

"I have personally warned those close to me not to talk about who are in whose camp. There should not be any factionalism or camps in the party.

"Such action will create a feeling of dissension among the leaders which will in the long run result in a split in the party," Muhammad said when asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's advice that there should be no power struggle among the leaders during the transition period.

Muhammad said the party has been known to be divided when some Umno members choose to forget the party's original struggle and instead work towards getting positions for themselves.

"So loyalty is no longer to the party but to individuals, and this hurts the party," he said.

Vice-president Datuk Seri Mohamed Najib Abdul Razak said he was confident that there would not be any power struggle among party members during the transition period.

"God willing, there will not be any power struggle during this time.

"The most important thing now is to ensure that the party remains united. There should not be any overzealous campaign for any individual as the party will be hurt which always leads to disunity."

Another vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said Umno leaders should not fight for positions in the party but instead give priority to the party's struggle.

"Umno's success is more important than the success of any individual. Dr Mahathir's wish for Umno to be united should be heeded by all.

"I think Umno's top echelon should listen to his call. He has said that he wants to see the party intact and there should not be any infighting. We should respect his wishes in not wanting to see a power struggle during the transition period in order for Umno to remain intact."

Umno supreme council member Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad said he believed Umno leaders especially the three vice-presidents would heed Dr Mahathir's advice.

"They will not fight as they have to behave. The three of them have to be seen like they are not going for each other's throat. The more they fight the more 'bad' they will become."

Wanita Umno information chief

Seripah Norli Syed Hussein said those with ambitions to take on higher positions in the party should avoid doing so until after the general election.

"We need to be united, undivided with one voice," said Seripah.