

I won't challenge Abdullah's nominee, says

Muhyiddin

Nst 2 2 JUN 2003

UMNO vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin assured delegates that he would not challenge anyone chosen as Deputy Prime Minister for the deputy president's post in the next party election.

Muhyiddin said he would give undivided support to the party leadership and would not harbour any ill feelings if he was not picked to be Number Two.

He said this was in order to avoid infighting in Umno.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, he said, had expressed concern that there would be an intense contest that would destroy the party after deputy president Datuk Seri **Abdullah Ahmad** Badawi took over at the helm in October.

"His concern is not without basis, as during his leadership as Umno president he witnessed so many contests that were detrimental to Umno.

"But I would like to re-affirm my stand again that I will not contest anyone picked by Abdullah as his deputy.

"I would like to openly declare it again here that I will not challenge anyone although I am also qualified by virtue of being a vice-president. It is of the utmost importance to ensure that there is a continuity in the leadership for the Malays, party and the nation," he said in his winding-up speech.

Muhyiddin said Umno members should give their undivided support to the person picked as deputy by Abdullah to strengthen the party.

We are Muslims. Our fate is in Allah's hands. We have to accept this."

Paying tribute to Dr Mahathir, Muhyiddin said throughout his political career, Dr Mahathir was intent on seeing the Malay race coming on par with other races in the world.

Dr Mahathir's courage, boldness and perseverance, he said, were just a few of the qualities of the president's political struggle. And due to his ability to lead, Dr Mahathir had led and inspired every Malay.

Umno, Muhyiddin said, had gone through a series of trials and tribulations but under Dr Mahathir's stewardship, the party managed to weather all storms.

Thus, Umno leaders must sacrifice for the party's sake to ensure that it could stand up to future challenges.

To Abdullah, Muhyiddin said he had every trust in the deputy president's ability to lead the party and the country.

Muhyiddin also said Umno members were obliged to strengthen and unify the party so that it could continue with its role as a political party, to uphold Islam and the rights of the Malays.

Umno members should also ask Dr Mahathir for forgiveness for their failure to fulfil his wishes during his tenure as party president,