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No infighting, Umno leaders agree

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - The bitter infighting that marred Umno's 1987 and 1993 party elections should never be repeated, Umno leaders and veterans agreed today.

They were commenting on Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's call yesterday to Umno members to avoid factionalism or risk weakening the party.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin described the coming party election as "a real unity test".

"In the past, many have been sacked for getting themselves involved in camps," he said.

"This would not bode well for a party which promotes unity among Malaysians, especially the Malays.

"Umno members must continue to uphold the party's unity to protect its interest."

Abdullah had said that factionalism led to conflicts embroiling all members, causing trouble and threatening Umno's unity.

In previous party elections, especially in 1987 and 1993, the formation of competing teams led to animosity that lingered long after the outcome of the election was settled.

In 1993, the then Finance Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim formed a "Vision Team" to oust the then deputy president Tun Ghafar Baba, and in 1988 the now-defunct Semangat 46 was born after Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah failed to unseat then president Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad the previous year.

Vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Taib said splits in the party would also weaken the nation.

"Party members must be mature and cautious during the coming party election," he said. "We won the last general election because we were a united front.

"Let this be a lesson to all of us."

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