

24/01/2003

Advice to reps and party leaders

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Elected representatives and party leaders who know they are no longer capable of effecting changes in their constituencies or parties should make way for new and younger people.

Barisan Nasional secretary-general Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said today such wakil rakyat and party leaders should not leave the decision whether to leave or stay to the Prime Minister or party president but should decide on their own.

He said the combination of new leaders would help ensure that the "dynamism and sparkle" of the Government and party remain.

"It is time for them (wakil rakyat and party leaders) to assess themselves and evaluate their performance. They should do away with the 'leave-it-to-the-president syndrome'. They should not be selfish by clinging to their position and realise that the process of re-generation is important to ensure that the younger generation will continue to support the Government.

"This is not about making a personal record for the longest serving wakil rakyat but whether one can serve the people better. As we enter a new era, the voters will be more confident if the wakil rakyat are smart and well-educated besides having leadership qualities."

Mohamed said as the new voters who were mostly the younger generation have high ideals, wakil rakyat must command the respect of the people of their constituency and this could only be achieved by their education, experience and professionalism.

"The present wakil rakyat and party leaders should not be too worried whether the party will be chaotic if they are not around. Even Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad when asked to change his mind and continue as the head of the country refused to do so. Dr Mahathir is sticking to his decision for his successor to replace him."

Umno Youth executive council member Subahan Kamal said it was not a question of whether the candidates were fresh faces or incumbents who were defending their seats.

"The question of whether one is young or old does not arise. What is more important is one's ability to deliver."

Negri Sembilan Wanita Umno head Datuk Napsiah Omar said the incumbent elected representatives should complete their full term before going around expressing their wish not to defend their seats.

"Otherwise, the people will lose their trust in their assemblymen and would not seek their help. Furthermore, it will also create unnecessary tussle in the division among those interested to be elected.

"When you are elected either as a State assemblyman or Member of Parliament, you should be committed and carry out your duties until election day," said Napsiah, who was formerly National Unity and Social Development Minister and Umno Supreme Council member.

In Kuantan, State executive councillors have left it to the Barisan Nasional leadership to decide their fate - whether or not they will be nominated as candidates in the general election.

Several State exco members interviewed today said it was normal for new candidates to be picked in a general election.

Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Tan Mohd Aminuddin Ishak said if the time came for him to vacate his seat to pave the way for a new face, he was ever willing to do so.

He would also continue to support the new candidate.

"When I was the candidate for the first time, the former State Assemblyman supported me and I would do the same to future candidates." State Culture, Arts, Tourism and Women's Affairs Committee chairman Datuk Maznah Mazlan said the main aim of Umno and BN was to struggle for the betterment of the race, religion and country and it would still continue regardless of her being the candidate or not.

"I leave it to Allah. Whatever the outcome, I accept with an open heart," the Muadzam Shah State assemblywoman said.

State Health, Youth and Sports Committee chairman Datuk Dr Ahmad Shukri Ismail said although the agreement reached by the Exco members to vacate their seats in the general election was not their personal choice, it was made in line with the party's policy.

"We did not say that we agreed to step down but we said we would leave it to the party leadership to decide on the matter.

State Welfare, Unity and Consumer Affairs committee chairman Datuk Law Kee Long said as long he was still an elected representative in Cameron Highlands he would continue to do his job and serve the people.

"When my term ends, then I would leave it to the party leadership to decide on my position."