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`Settle problems without involving top leadership'

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Umno division and branch leaders and members must settle their problems without involving top party leaders.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said today the party president and deputy president had more important matters to deal with.

"We should not create problems in the divisions and branches which will eventually cause difficulties to the party's top leadership.

"Problems, whether they are to do with office-bearers or rifts between the Youth and division heads, should be resolved through discussions," Muhyiddin said at the opening of Wangsa Maju Umno division delegates' conference, near here.

Muhyiddin, who is Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister, said party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi had global matters to concentrate on.

He said Umno leaders must remain united and continue fighting for the Malays as only the party could play an important role in upgrading the community.

"I read in the newspapers today about Pas struggling for the people. You can never depend on them (Pas) and the only choice for the Malays is surely Umno and Barisan Nasional.

"That being the situation, Umno members should not allow the problems and weaknesses in the party to jeopardise our struggle for the people. We must continue fighting for the Malays."

On the action of division leaders who continued suggesting certain individuals as the next deputy prime minister despite Abdullah's advice not to do so, Muhyiddin said:

"All quarters should listen to the party leadership's advice.

"I do not wish to comment much on this as Abdullah has already made it clear that members should follow Umno's tradition. If we do not respect the party, it will only result in problems for us."

Muhyiddin said this when asked on the speech by a division head yesterday during its Wanita delegates' conference which promoted a certain party leader as the next deputy prime minister and ran down another leader.

Abdullah recently told all divisions not to name any candidate for the post of deputy prime minister. The issue arose following a statement by Chenderoh Umno division head Datuk Seri Nazri Aziz who openly declared support for Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak to be made deputy to Abdullah.

Nazri had clarified that his division had not issued any resolution endorsing Najib as the next deputy prime minister and that he had made the statement in his personal capacity as the division head.