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More leaders support 'no-contest mood' move

SEVERAL division heads agreed yesterday that contests for top party positions will create in-fighting and squabbling that can destroy the party.

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Taib, who is also Hulu Selangor division chief, said a contest would disunite party members.

"We must remain united in order to continue our struggle for the race and nation. If there is in-fighting, we cannot concentrate on our main tasks," he said when asked to comment on party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's speech on Thursday.

Dr Mahathir said any scramble for the party's top posts next year could be avoided by creating a "no-contest mood" among members now.

Pulai division head Tan Sri Mohamed Rahmat said contests, especially for the top post, could mean the end of Umno and would result in disunity and chaos.

Mohamed said history showed that the fall of political parties was due to internal problems.

Tambun division head Datuk Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah said in-fighting in Umno would destroy the party, which would be disastrous at a time when the Malays were still weak and needed Umno's support.

"Umno members are obligated to strengthen and unify the party to continue its role as a political party, and to uphold Islam and rights of the Malays."

Seremban Umno division chief Datuk Ishak Ismail believed the deputy president's post should not be contested unless the party's grassroots found the president's choice unappealing.

He said the wisdom behind the president's choice would be scrutinised and analysed by the grassroots, and the latter would revolt if the choice was perceived as unwise.

Johor Baru division chief Datuk Shahrir Abdul Samad felt that the president should have the discretion to choose who among party members would be the deputy president.

"There must be a balance between the discretionary powers of the president and popular choice ... the grassroots choice is reflected in the election of the three vice-presidents, from among whom the president will choose his deputy."

Bukit Bendera division chief Datuk Ahmad Ismail said a "no contest" for both the president's and deputy president's posts should be made a party tradition, as both positions were symbols of Malay strength.

Tebrau Umno division chief Datuk Mohd Ali Hassan said contest for the deputy president's post would cause rumour-mongering and back-stabbing among members, leading to divisions in the party.

"History has shown that whenever there were contests for the deputy president's post, the party was split into factions."