

03/01/2003

Najib: Don't over-react to talk of power struggle

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Umno leaders have been advised not to overreact to statements of a possible power struggle in the party when its president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad resigns from all his political posts in October.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today Pas was making such suggestions in the hope of creating problems in Umno and thereby weakening the party.

"Party members should not become victims of such tactics. Pas is attempting to create a situation where Umno members will become less confident of a smooth power transition.

"If that happens, problems will arise in Umno and this will weaken the party.

"Pas hopes to take advantage of this and strengthen its position. This is its political strategy," said Najib, who is also Defence Minister, at a Press conference at his ministry.

He was asked to comment on a statement by Opposition leader and Pas acting president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang on Tuesday that Dr Mahathir's decision to resign from all his political posts would cause a power struggle in Umno.

Dr Mahathir, when replying to this yesterday, said he was confident there would be no power struggle in Umno when he retires and is succeeded by his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Najib said Hadi was making this prediction and perhaps was hoping to see a power struggle in Umno.

He added that there would not be any power struggle in Umno as aspects of the transition have been defined clearly by Dr Mahathir and all quarters had agreed to them.

"Pas, of course, does not want to see Umno remain strong as it fears we will pose a threat to its strongholds of Kelantan and Terengganu. That's why Pas leaders are attempting to create problems within Umno," Najib said.

Another vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said Hadi's statement showed that Pas relied on the internal problems within Umno to ensure its victory.

"It does not have its own strength to ensure victory.

"The only way for Pas to win is to create problems in Umno and thus to achieve its political aims.

"In the past, records have shown that Pas won in some constituencies which were Umno strongholds due to internal problems within Umno.

"The situation today is different as Umno's strength has increased.

"Pas therefore wants to create problems," Muhammad said.