

'Umno veeps will cooperate closely in coming polls'

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By Nigel Aw

Umno vice-president Hishammuddin Hussein has said that he and his fellow vice-presidents will be cooperating closely in facing the upcoming party elections.

This comes after Hishammuddin and fellow Umno vice-presidents Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Shafie Apdal announced that they will all defend their positions in the party.

"As Umno vice-president, as in the past and every year, the cooperation between me, Zahid and Shafie is a close one.

"If it is a strength and an advantage and it helps the party, I'd say that it should be continued," he told a press conference after a walkabout at Terminal Bersepadu Selatan, Kuala Lumpur this morning.

NONEHe was responding to a query on whether the three incumbent Umno vice-presidents will form an alliance in fending off any challenges in the October party polls.

Hishammuddin (second from right in photo) stressed that the vice-presidents' close cooperation does not mean that they were forming teams within Umno.

"There are no teams, there is only one team, which is Umno," he said.

He added that his close cooperation with Zahid and Shafie had gone way back and is not solely for the party election.

"Don't link (cooperation) only in the context of the contest (party election) because our relationship is more than just an alliance and cooperation for party positions. That is not our way," he said.

'Don't split the party'

Hishammuddin, who is Sembrong MP, said his grassroots have backed a no-contest for the Umno presidency and deputy presidency but he had "no problems" if anyone wanted to challenge the party's vice-presidents.

However, he warned against any actions that would cause the party to split or

weaken.

This year's Umno elections will be the first time that 150,000 members will vote for the party's top leadership after a amendment was made to the party's constitution to expand the voting base from the previous 2,600 delegates.

NONEHailing it as a positive move, Hishammuddin said the only concern now is a smooth implementation of the new election format and the party has taken precautions, including preparing manual back-up should its biometric system fail during the elections.

After the press conference, Hishammuddin, who is also Defence Minister and acting Transport Minister, was presented with a cake to cut in conjunction with his birthday today.

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