

**Umno leaders mum on retreat**  
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No details were divulged to the outside world from the start till end, as Umno supreme council ended their MCPX two-day retreat at Shah Alam today.

Touted as a no-holds-barred opportunity for its 52 top leaders to discuss and suggest ways to revitalise the party following the ruling coalition's unprecedented setback in the March 8 elections, most of them either made quick exits or kept mum.

The president and his deputy gave reporters and their cameramen the slip, disappointing numerous press members who waited from morning till noon to no avail.

Even the normally friendly and approachable leaders like party information chief Muhamad Muhd Taib and secretary-general Tengku Adnan Mansor were nowhere to be found.

umno retreat 060608 03The only ones around were Johor Baru MP Shahrir Abdul Samad and Tanjung Karang chief Noh Omar, who took the opportunity to speak about the petrol price hike.

After being pressed for comment on the retreat, Shahrir conceded that they discussed about party strategy planning and added, "My only disappointment is that I was only here this morning.

"To me, this was a good opportunity for all the members of supreme council to sit down and discuss on what to do with the party."

However, he declined to reveal the strategies discussed at the closed-door retreat.

On the matter of political backlash resulting from the fuel hike, Shahrir in his capacity as minister of domestic trade and consumer affairs responded, "I don't think that there is any potential backlash because in the end the government is giving back to the people."

"There are other things coming," he added as a prelude to future announcements.

On the anti-fuel hike demonstrations planned, he replied that the government was already expecting some groups to take advantage of the situation.

But he reasoned that despite the substantial increase, there was also a form of 'give back' to vehicle owners and there the net increase is far less than 78 sen.

"What is important for government now is to ensure that the 'give back' is handled efficiently, smoothly and quickly," he summed up.

### **Cyber war**

Another supreme council member, who spoke on the condition of anonymity was equally

vague on the questions of whether they had discussed any of the pressing issues of the party like Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's leadership, a finalised succession plan or former PKR Youth chief Ezam Mohd Nor's re-entry into Umno.

Most of the discussions revolved around how the party can be more relevant and what were its weaknesses following elections, he said.

One of the shortcomings, he said, was the inability of Umno to respond to criticisms from bloggers and other online media.

"Before this, we didn't think it was important to respond to such the criticisms which appeared on the Internet.

"But this was a critical error and during the retreat we decided that there is an urgent need to respond to the lies and criticisms we received," he added.

This is Umno's first supreme council retreat since the general elections on March 8.

During the retreat, vice-presidents Mohd Ali Rustam and Muhyiddin Yassin and Muhamad Taib led separate sessions to discuss the party's recent setback.

President Abdullah and his deputy Najib Abdul Razak delivered keynote addresses yesterday.

### **Leaders gagged?**

Meanwhile, Muhyiddin when met at a separate function later, declined to reveal what transpired during the two-day retreat.

umno retreat muhyiddin yassin pc 060608"I have no authority to say anything. The thing you know is we had a pow-wow, that's it. What we discussed, I don't think I have the authority to tell you.

"After all, it is matter of strategy (and) importance (that we discussed)... you don't announce to people what the strategy is," he told reporters at his office at the International Trade and Industry Ministry in Kuala Lumpur.

He also refused to confirm whether the party's leadership succession plan was discussed.

"I have no right to say anything... You don't have to ask that question, I will never say anything. Ask any other question lah," said Muhyiddin, who is reportedly eyeing a top party post.

Pressed by journalists whether the outcome of the two-day meeting was positive, he replied in an apparent sarcastic tone: "Yeah... very positive".

umno party post polls quotaHowever, Muhyiddin was later reported by Bernama that Umno divisions are allowed to hold emergency general meetings (EGMs) if they want to propose changes in the quota system for Umno polls.

Under the party constitution, a candidate wishing to contest the president's post must obtain nominations from at least 30 percent of the 193 divisions (58 nominations).

Challengers require 20 percent (38) for the deputy president's post, 10 percent (19) for an elected vice-president's post, and 5 percent (10) for a seat on the supreme council.

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