

Defuse Umno implosion quickly: MPs
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The internal fissures appearing in Umno is more worrying than the Sept 16 deadline given by opposition stalwart Anwar Ibrahim to form a new government.

In view of this, Sabah Umno leader Anifah Aman said something must be done to resolve the problems within the party.

anifah aman "What is happening now is that Umno leaders seem to be more preoccupied with the speculated defections of some MPs instead of addressing the problems within Umno itself," he told Bernama.

Anifah, who is also chairman of the Sabah BN MPs' Backbenchers Club, said Umno MPs would not switch camps if the party remained strong and its top leadership was not sidetracked by other issues.

"I am much more concerned or worried about what is to become of Umno, especially with the impending party elections in December, than other matters," said the BN MP for Kimanis and Umno Kimanis division head.

Anwar, who returned to Parliament after a 10-year hiatus, has been threatening to stage a political coup with the defection of BN MPs to the opposition alliance, Pakatan Rakyat.

However, Anifah said this will not happen if the top Umno leadership fixes the issues plaguing the party.

He also cited Umno vice-president Muhyiddin Yassin's call on Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi to step down before the 2010 transition of power plan.

The Sabah leader said this was also an important issue which should be addressed before things got worse in Umno, which forms the backbone of the ruling coalition.

Yesterday, Abdullah expressed surprise over Muhyiddin's call, saying that the vice-president had previously agreed to the transition time-frame.

Component parties are worried

Another BN MP, Dr Tiki Lafe also expressed concern over the rumblings in Umno.

He said other BN component parties which regarded Umno as their "big brother" were beginning to get worried.

Dr. Tiki Lafe, who is vice-president of the Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDP) and a former deputy minister, said he could see signs of a "crisis" brewing in Umno following Muhyiddin's open remarks.

He also described the racial slur controversy surrounding Umno Bukit Bendera division chief Ahmad Ismail as a worrying trend, adding that by suspending his membership for three

years for making the remarks, the party was only "treating the symptoms."

"I believe the controversy sparked by Ahmad is just the tip of the iceberg and things are not looking that good for the BN either.

"We MPs have to face our constituents who voted us in and if the leadership is not receptive or sensitive to our grouses, then the problems on the ground are likely to grow," he warned.

Asked why he was not among the BN backbenchers now visiting Taiwan on a study tour of agricultural projects, Tiki said he felt the trip would not serve its purpose.

"Furthermore, the timing is not right when there's so much problems at home that we should be more concerned with," he said of the eight-day visit by 49 BN backbenchers who left early this week.

The opposition claims that the tour was hastily organised in order to prevent the defection of government MPs but BN has dismissed this.

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