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Najib quashes talk of a rift

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There is no split between me and my deputy, says PM

KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak has quashed talk of a rift with his deputy Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, saying those expecting a split between them "will be disappointed".

The Umno president said he had a heart-to-heart talk with Muhyiddin yesterday morning, before his monthly gathering with staff of the Prime Minister's Department in Putrajaya.

"I gave an undertaking that we will always discuss heart-to-heart to ensure that the Umno top leadership is in a comfortable and solid position.

"This is so that no one can try to cause a rift, especially between me and my deputy," the Prime Minister and Barisan Nasional chairman told a packed media conference after chairing the Umno supreme council meeting at the party headquarters yesterday afternoon.

Najib's critics had claimed there was a widening rift between the two leaders over the Government's handling of a number of issues, including the 1MDB controversy.

Talk of tension between the two was further fuelled by Muhyiddin's remarks in Milan, where he attributed Barisan's failure to perform well in the Permatang Pauh by-election to the ruling coalition not being able to address the people's queries on 1MDB and the Goods and Services Tax.

With the Deputy Prime Minister and Umno No. 2 seated next to him, Najib expressed gratitude to him for "giving fruitful ideas on current issues regarding the party and Government".

He said the supreme council had expressed solid support for Muhyiddin and him and wanted the party's top leaders to remain united in facing the challenges.

"We will undertake efforts to further strengthen the standing of Umno and Barisan in the eyes of



Full backing: Najib cheerfully holding the Umno flag at the party's 69th anniversary celebration at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur. Looking on is Muhyiddin.

the people," the party president declared.

Supreme council members expressed optimism that Umno would remain united, with vice-president Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein saying: "Differences between leaders is normal but what is important is to work things out."

Datuk Abdul Rahman Dahlan described claims that the supreme council would pressure Najib to step down as "utter rubbish".

"We never had such an inten-

tion. Our discussions at the meeting were done in a brotherly manner. If there were concerns prior to the meeting, we came out of it relieved that issues between the president and his deputy have been cleared," he said.

Wanita chief Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil said the atmosphere and "body language" between Najib and Muhyiddin were positive.

"As the president said during the meeting, a united Umno leadership will further strengthen the party. We

admit that there are several issues that must be resolved, but thankfully, ties between the president and deputy remain good," she said.

Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin rubbished talk of a clandestine plan to oust Najib, saying that it was being spread by irresponsible parties.

He singled out blogger Zamkata, adding that what was written by former information minister Tan Sri Zainuddin Maidin in the blog on such a plan was baseless.