

Newspaper	NEW STRAITS TIMES
Date	18/09/2017

'MAT TAIB' RETURNS TO UMNO

NST-18/9/2017 pg. 2

Opposition's
struggles are
'pointless'

ADRIAN LAI
AND HANA NAZ HARUN
KUALA LUMPUR
news@nst.com.my

FOUR years after joining the opposition, veteran politician Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib yesterday made a dramatic return to Umno.

In a highly-anticipated press conference here, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said Muhammad chose to return to the party fold after realising that the opposition's struggles, especially PKR's, were "pointless".

"The opposition's struggles are in direct contradiction with his personal beliefs and principles," Najib said before a packed press conference at Umno's headquarters here yesterday.

Najib, who is also Umno president, expressed confidence that Muhammad's return would strengthen the party and Barisan Nasional.

Asked whether Muhammad would fill an important position in Umno, Najib said the matter would be discussed later.

He said Muhammad, who served as Selangor menteri besar from 1986 to 1997, rejoined Umno out of sincerity, and that the question of party posts did not arise.

The announcement comes as

another blow for the opposition, following the resignation of two senior Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (PPBM) leaders — founding member Anina Saadudin and PPBM vice-president Datuk Hamidah Osman — on Saturday.

Commenting briefly on the resignations, Najib said PPBM was experiencing a "storm".

Muhammad, popularly known as Mat Taib, is a veteran Umno leader.

He made a surprise move to Pas in 2013 and to PKR two years later.

He held key posts during his time in Umno, including stints as vice-president from 2000 to 2003 and information chief from 2008 to 2009.

He is also a former rural and regional development minister.

Present during the press conference were Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Wanita Umno chief Tan Sri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil, Selangor Umno liaison committee chairman Tan Sri Noh Omar and Umno secretary-general Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor.

Commenting on his return to Umno, Muhammad said he felt that his years in the opposition were "in vain".

"In the party (PKR) meetings I attended, the Malay agenda was never discussed.

"I think there is no party but Umno that will always fight for the interests of the Malays."

Muhammad added that he would play an active role in Selangor Umno to wrest the state



Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Razak welcoming Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. With them are Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and Umno Supreme Council members. PIC BY MOHD YUSNI ARIFFIN

from PKR in the upcoming 14th General Election.

"The Malays in Selangor are being sidelined and they are losing out.

"The state may look great, but the Malays are on the losing end under the current ruling party."

He said he left PKR because he felt that the Malays in Pakatan

Harapan were disunited.

"I worry that there are sides who will take advantage of this split and grab power.

"Therefore, the Malays should stand together under Umno to strengthen the Malay community."

Muhammad said he felt that the Malays, who were the major-

ity in the country, should retain their political dominance.

"If political power is taken away from the Malays, I believe this will lead to great friction.

"Umno, on the other hand, is a solid party that takes care of all races, including the Malays."

Additional reporting by Soo Wern Jun