

Like choosing a durian – that’s how you choose your leaders, Isa Samad tells Umno members
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BY EILEEN NG

The prickly durian is probably the last thing on the minds of the 146,000 Umno delegates who will choose their leaders on October 19, but vice-president aspirant Tan Sri Mohd Isa Samad is using this thorny simile in his campaign to drum up support.

He said choosing the next crop of leaders to lead the Malay party is like choosing durian – go for the best and most fragrant from the pile.

“When we buy durian, even if it is sold by the longgok (pile), we must still check each fruit carefully. We must smell and shake it thoroughly. We must pick only the good ones. The same principle applies when selecting leaders,” he said in an interview with English daily The Star.

Isa is among the six men vying for the three vice-presidents spots in Umno, including incumbents Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein and Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal. The other two are former Malacca chief minister Datuk Seri Mohd Ali Rustam and Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir.

Isa advised the grassroots not to be influenced by candidates who contest as a team, saying that leaders should be chosen based on their capabilities and ability to serve.

“The grassroots can decide to retain incumbents, have a mix of old and new faces or have a totally new team of leaders. But I don’t agree when teams are formed,” he said.

Isa’s dislike for teams is understandable – he lost his bid for the Umno Youth chief post in 1993 to Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik, then part of the so-called “Team Wawasan”.

The Felda chairman hopes members will give him another chance as vice-president.

In the 2004 party polls, Isa won the vice-presidency with the highest number of votes. However, a year later, he had to quit the position, as well as his cabinet post as the Federal Territories minister, after he was found guilty of breaching party’s election rules.

“I’m offering my service because I believe I can use my experience and knowledge to serve them. I want to serve this party which has given me so much.

“I feel my chances are good,” said Isa, who was the Negeri Sembilan menteri besar from 1982 to 2004. - October 6, 2013.

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