

10/02/1998

Ahmad Zahid: Allow contests where changes are needed

SEREMBAN, Mon. - The Umno Youth supports the no-contest call by party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad but challenges should be allowed at divisions where change was necessary.

Umno Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said that the no-contest call should not encompass divisions where a change in the divisional head's post was necessary for the party's progress.

Dr Mahathir had, after chairing the Kelantan Umno liaison committee meeting last month in Kota Baru, said that there should not be any contest for the post of divisional chief in Kelantan except for Gua Musang.

The Prime Minister, who is party president and the State liaison chief, said the decision only applied to Kelantan but he wanted to see a compromise for the other Umno divisions.

Dr Mahathir cited party unity and the need to strengthen Umno in the State as reasons for the agreement.

"I am optimistic with what the Prime Minister has said but we must also look at the needs of the division's grass roots as the strength of a leader revolves round his grassroot support," Ahmad Zahid said.

Speaking after attending a Umno gathering organised by the Seremban Umno division here yesterday, he said Umno Youth was very open on the matter.

But he said Umno Youth felt that they should be given a chance to contest as Umno Youth was different from Umno Wanita who had no age limit in holding posts at Youth level.

He said that as members of the Umno Youth grew older, they would definitely want to contest for divisional posts but not necessarily the highest posts available.

"It would be practical to give them an opportunity to at least contest a Umno division committee seat.

"Otherwise, the talent and potential of these Youth leaders will simply fade away with time."

He said at least 40 to 50 per cent of Umno Youth members who had reached the age limit should be given this opportunity to allow continuity in their leadership.

(END)