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Vital to establish firm links with the young

IS Umno Youth finally admitting to the fact that it no longer has a channel to the young?

Its acting head, Datuk Hishammudin Hussein Onn said on Monday that he was aware of this problem and that it was critical that Umno Youth became relevant to the young.

Yesterday, in the Youth meeting, he also talked about the importance of reaching out to the young.

This suggests an acknowledgment that the Youth wing does not have strong links with the younger generation.

"Yes, there is a problem," said an Umno Youth member. "Umno has failed to attract the young. There are so many young professionals who are disillusioned."

However, Umno Youth exco member, Mokhzani Mahathir is not so pessimistic. "It's not that we've failed altogether, only with certain groups.

"Our problem was that we relied on NGOs to make the crucial link with students. Later, when these groups became unfriendly to us, we lost the connection," said Mokhzani, who is also Merbok division chief.

"Now we have to make a concerted effort again to reconnect with the young," he adds.

These NGOs, other Umno members said, were aligned with former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. When he left, Umno's link to students was severed.

"The only way to change this is for Umno Youth members to take off their double-breasted suits and do what Pas has been doing for more than two decades.

"Get down, get real. Talk to them on the same level. Only then will they earn the respect of the young," said an activist.

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