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Khalil: Rectify weaknesses

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BALING, Sun. - Umno and its 2.8 million members must correct their weaknesses first before the party can be strengthened and effectively counter the Opposition.

Party secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob said having a large membership would be meaningless if the party failed to exploit its strengths.

He said complacency among members and internal bickering had provided political mileage for those who opposed Umno, especially Pas.

"We lost seats in the general election not because Pas is a strong party," he said after closing the Baling Umno convention yesterday.

Khalil said contests for party posts usually affected unity and the party's strength.

"We are appealing to the good senses of our members to put party interests first ... they should try to work it out collectively."

Khalil, who is also Information Minister, said the last general election saw Umno losing many seats to Pas. He called for a more concerted approach to instil among members the sense of responsibility to the party.

"Generally, Umno members are still in a daze and they have not got over it (the loss of seats) yet.

"That's why we have decided there should be more interaction between the party leaders and members."

Khalil also said Umno had identified a team of officers who would be sent to countries where a large number of Malaysians were studying or working to counter the political strategies of the Opposition.

These officers, whose appointment was endorsed by party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, have been entrusted to explain to the two groups the Government's political ideologies.

They would be working on their own and would report directly to the party. They would also be working closely with Umno Clubs.

Setting up Barisan Nasional Clubs overseas is another proposal to swing the support of pro-Opposition students to the Government.

Asked whether State Umno liaison committees should hold more meetings to streamline activities in the respective States, Khalil said liaison chiefs should take note of the frequency of supreme council meetings.

"We are not going to issue a directive on this but liaison chiefs must take heed of what is happening at the central committee," he said.

Khalil said the supreme council was now meeting more regularly.

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