

Umno Youth chief throws challenge to exco members

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — Brushing aside suggestions that he is too nice to be a leader, Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein has thrown a challenge to his exco members to keep pace with the movement's activities which he will introduce for the next three years, as the party prepares for the next general election in 2004.

The Umno Youth chief, in an interview with the *New Sunday Times*, said there were a number of exco members who perceived him as weak and had no leadership direction.

"Now, for the next three years, I will decide the direction of Umno Youth.

"I will decide the activities and I want to see how many exco members can keep pace with our activities.

"I want to see how many are willing to go down to meet the grassroots, especially those who have been pointing the finger at others."

Hishammuddin, who is also the Youth and

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Sports Minister, threw a challenge to his exco members, saying he wanted to see how many of them could accept his challenge and ensure the success of the programmes he planned to introduce at the grassroots.

"Those who want to follow, can do so and those who refuse will be left behind and people can judge for themselves (the performance of the exco members)," he said in a three-and-a-half-hour interview. (Q&A on P25-27)

Asked whether a "nice" person like him suited the rough and tumble of today's politics, Hishammuddin said:

"I don't want to be known as Mr Nice Guy all the time.

"But is it wrong to be nice? There is enough hatred and anger out

there, that it might be refreshing to have somebody who smiles.

"There are certain things that I feel strongly about and I don't mince my words.

"I will find the culprits who betray the trust of the party, betray the exco and betray our struggles."

Hishammuddin also dismissed suggestions that his ascendancy in Umno was because "he is the son of a former Prime Minister (Tun Hussein Onn)".

"I never got that on a silver platter. It was not parachuted down to me," he said.

He also rebutted claims that Umno Youth is an elitist movement, citing the defeat of his private secretary Razali Ibrahim to a junior assistant at the Muar land office, Abdul Rahman Aziz, for the Muar Youth division chief post.

"There are good examples — for example, my private secretary Razali Ibrahim, a lawyer by profession, who contested in Muar (youth chief), lost to a clerk. "We cannot say Umno is so exclusive, so elitist, that you have to be the son of a PM to get in because there are cases where that's not the case.

"Why look at the Muar incident as something negative?

"Look at it (contest in Muar division involving Razali) positively as Umno is open even to a clerk."

Hishammuddin also spoke of his ambition in politics saying that "when you go into politics, you have to aim for the highest position.

"The moment I see that I am not needed then I will gladly go, without any regret, fear or whatever," he stated.