

'Umno must open door to youths'

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Umno must widen its dimensions to understand the aspirations of youths, especially the Malays, and accommodate their ideas and wishes, Negri Sembilan delegate Shahziman Abdul Mansor said.

"Umno must be more caring, friendly and understanding of their feelings, failing which we will invite danger at the next general election," he said when debating the president's speech.

Shahziman criticised Umno supreme council members who left it to party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad alone to answer allegations against the party and government.

He said this was also the duty of supreme council members, as some of them are also in the government.

Wanita Umno delegate Halimah Mohd Saddique called for the party to attract more youths.

She said the Malays, especially the youths, must understand the meaning of Malay special rights.

Halimah said this was something which Umno had worked for with all Barisan Nasional parties for the betterment of the Malays.

However, she said, many Malays had forgotten this.

Halimah said that to continue Umno's struggle, all party members must be united, grateful, and not forget what had been achieved.

Perak delegate Saarani Mohamad said Umno must follow up on its progress after the 1999 general election and assess its strength.

"We must find out whether voters driven away from Umno over the Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim issue have returned to us," he said.

Saarani said the younger generation supports the Opposition as they have been deceived by opposition parties, who use certain tactics to lure them.

"It is unfair of us to point fingers only at Umno Youth and Puteri Umno, as we are all responsible for

the younger generation.

"We have to mingle with university students, who are the potential voters in the 2004 general election," he said.

Saarani said Umno should not reprimand or penalise them for voting for the Opposition in the last general election.

Similarly, Malacca dele-

gate Datuk Abu Pit said Umno must open its doors to the younger generation and the intellectuals before they turn to the Opposition.

He also cautioned party leaders to be careful when choosing candidates for the next general election, to ensure they can adapt to the local residents.

Perlis delegate Ismail Kassim suggested the setting up of a research and development committee to plan the party's strategies.

He said the committee's findings could be used as a guideline for members to counter lies spread by opposition parties.

Ismail said Umno lead-

ers at all levels must be professional in their work.

He said there were many Umno branch leaders who don't have the "charisma or confidence".

Times have changed, and hence, the party and its members cannot take for granted what has been achieved, Ismail said.