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## Call to understand struggles

FOR several Umno veterans, the re-union held in conjunction with the party's 55th Anniversary was definitely a trip down memory lane as they recollected their life during Umno's early struggle of which they were a part.

Among them were veterans who have been with Umno since it was formed in 1946. As they sat in the Merdeka Hall of the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur, they saw the past glory of Umno in a short documentary which the Umno headquarters presented.

It was also a time for them to ponder where the party is heading in the current political situation. Many hope that Umno leaders and the younger members will continue with Umno's struggle and cast aside any material ambition for the glory of the people and the country.

Mohd Abdul Karim, 77, from Kampung Tun Razak said that although Umno today was far better than when he joined in terms of its achievements, the younger generation of Umno members should be made to understand the struggles and sacrifices of the elders.

"I feel sad that I cannot be active anymore. Although I'm still an Umno member, due to my age I feel that I'm a failure to the party as I feel so hopeless when some people keep throwing accusations at Umno.

"My only hope is for the younger members to defend the party but they can only do that if they appreciate the painstaking efforts of Umno members before them."

Osman Yahaya, 70, who joined the party in 1946, said the Umno leaders then were willing to sacrifice their time and wealth just for the party and the Malays.

"We were never concerned about monetary gains. When we carried out activities we used our own money.

"But it makes me sad that some leaders now have moved away from this. They join Umno for their own interests."

He said some of the young members today join the party without being aware of its history and past struggles.

"They have no knowledge at all about what Umno used to be and how we worked hard to achieve the position we are in today."

His friend, 72-year old Abdul Hamid Hassan, said Umno's poor performance during the 1999 general election, had prompted him to come forward and play an active role again in the party.

"I have not been very active for some time due to ill health. I feel sad that Umno is no longer enjoying the support that it used to get.

"Umno used to rule Malay politics. But suddenly our support has waned. I feel I have to take it upon myself to help Umno regain its lost ground."

Abdul Hamid said the younger generation was ignorant of Umno's struggles and does not appreciate the contributions of the early leaders.

"It seems all our fight to achieve and fulfil independence has been forgotten.

"Some party leaders do not make an effort to get to know the veterans. What is wrong in talking to us and listening to our experiences," said Abdul Hamid who was the Kulim/Bandar Baru division's former treasurer.

Yong Jais, 67, from Parit Sulong said it pains him to see the younger generation of Umno members more interested in making gains from the party rather than contributing to it.

"As much as they can, the younger generation should uphold Umno's

struggles but I cannot see that now. It makes me wonder whether one day Umno which has been the party for the Malays can still rule the country."

Selangor division committee member Abu Hassan Mohd Amin, 77, said he sees Umno as still strong although young Malays prefer to join the Opposition.

"These people are easily influenced by the Opposition. They are young and inexperienced, making them an easy target for parties like Pas and Parti Keadilan Nasional," added the former teacher who joined the party since its formation in 1946.

The party leadership, Abu Hasan said, should immediately look into ways to attract the younger people to join Umno before it was too late.

He also praised party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for bringing rapid progress to the country.

Simpang Tiga branch chairman Morsidi Mohsin, 72, acknowledged the problems faced by the present leadership but said his support for the party remained unflagging.

"As a veteran, I feel one major difference in the party now and during its early years is that the present leaders are more far-sighted," said Morsidi who joined the party in 1954.

Asked if he had any advice for the present leadership, Morsidi said leaders at all levels should not rest on their laurels in face of the Opposition's growing influence.

Aishah Hassan, 64, of Kuala Kedah and Rokiah Norkiah Abdul Hamid, 59, of Alor Star felt that Umno's battered credibility was "the work of the opposition".

They said that Umno should at the same time work towards improving its image and return the party to its former strength.

"We must make our children understand what Umno has done for the country and how hard the party's struggle was," said Aishah.

Rokiah said many young Malays are not aware of Umno's struggle and contributions so they do not appreciate the party. This made it easy for them to condemn Umno.

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