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Nothing more vital than election win in 2004, says new Youth chief

BEING popular is unimportant to Jamilluddin Jonit.

For the newly-appointed Malacca Umno Youth chief, personal gain is secondary. What takes precedence is the victory of Umno and the Barisan Nasional in 2004.

He is, therefore, unaffected if people do not know who he is. What matters to him is that he is able to carry out his responsibilities.

Jamilluddin, 40, feels that it is better to judge a person by his work rather than his position.

"I don't mind if no one knows who I am. As long as I have carried out my responsibilities, I am happy. Even if no one remembers what I have done, let it be," he said recently.

Born in Kampung Pulau, Malacca, on July 15, 1961, his views were influenced by his long involvement in politics, from the time he was appointed the Kampung Pulau Umno Youth secretary in the early 80s.

He rapidly moved up the ranks until he was elected the Alor Gajah Youth chief in 1995, a post which he still holds.

This father of four is also a member of the Umno Youth executive council and deputy chairman of Umno's Training Bureau.

He may be considered as the senior most Umno division Youth chief in Malacca, but Jamilluddin believes that his task as the Youth chief is "very challenging and very difficult".

Like almost everyone else, he believes that the 1999 general election was a wake-up call.

For Umno Youth, it had opened their eyes to all the mistakes they had had made over the years.

"All these years, we have been taking Umno's strength and wide acceptance among the Malays for granted.

"But what happened in 1999 proved otherwise."

The general election provided many lessons for Umno Youth, the biggest of which was that the movement had been neglecting the younger generation, particularly students, for far too long.

For a start, a restructuring exercise has been carried out.

Rakan Remaja Umno has been set up in all divisions to enable Umno Youth to get closer with those between 13 and 16 years old.

Jamilluddin said Umno Youth hoped that by exposing them to Umno's struggle, they would apply to become a full-time member once they turned 17.

"Another challenge that we have to undertake is to get closer to students and explain what Umno is and what Umno means to the Malays and the country.

"These tasks are not easy but I believe that if we do it continuously with commitment, sooner or later we will see the results."

For Jamilluddin, the understanding of Umno's concept and struggle from the day of its formation is vital to ensure its continued survival.

And to achieve this, Umno Youth has been carrying out regular training exercises for members at its training centre in Pulau Besar.

To date, Jamilluddin said, 10 courses have been conducted and he expected about 500,000 members to have undergone the courses by 2004.

"The younger generation must realise that what we have today is due to Umno's struggle. Umno has never committed a sin against the Malays. In fact, Umno has contributed a lot to the Malays."

He urges his colleagues to emulate party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and State Umno liaison chief Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam.

"If our president (Dr Mahathir) can continue to be high-spirited despite being condemned and ridiculed by the opposition, I do not see why we, as the younger ones, cannot be like that."

For Jamilluddin, 1999 was a warning from Allah for Umno to change.

"If we heed this warning, I am sure we will survive."

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