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Expo for Bumi entrepreneurs

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KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Umno Youth will be hosting the National Young Bumiputera Entrepreneurs Expo at the Putra World Trade Centre next week to create networking opportunities for Malay entrepreneurs and to introduce their products to the public.

Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said the expo, organised by the wing's economic bureau, would showcase products by 63 local companies from June 18-22.

"This initiative is most appropriate as the Malay race is faced with increasing challenges in the world today. In this way, we can overcome our weaknesses and ensure we are not left behind in all matters, and not just education," he said today.

The expo also aims to help Malay entrepreneurs find agents or sales representatives to market their products nationally and internationally, and foster closer relationships between Umno entrepreneurs.

It will showcase products like locally made cigars and digital door locks as well as products by Umno Youth members from all districts.

He said Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would launch the expo, which will also coincide with the Umno general assembly.

The wing would also take the opportunity to collect donations for the Palestinian People's Humanitarian Fund at the two events, he said.

"Other than the assembly and the expo, Umno Youth will also set up two exhibitions, one on the Afghanistan Welfare Fund and on our Pemuda Masuk Kampung programme."

Umno Youth also received sponsorship cheques for the expo today from Apex Communication Group, who contributed RM70,000, and Habib Jewels Sdn Bhd, who contributed RM50,000.

Hishammuddin also said he had appointed nine people to form the special committee which will study the reasons for the low number of Bumiputera students in private institutes of higher learning (IPTS).

Umno Youth Exco members Datuk Dr Zambry Abd Kadir, Zulkifli Mohd Alwi, Ikmal Hisham Abd Aziz, Ismail Sabri Yaakob, Subahan Kamal, Affendi Zahari, Mohammad Norza Zakaria and Khairy Jamaluddin would join committee chairman Dr Adham Baba to meet all 600 IPTS to study funding problems faced by Bumiputera students and all other related issues, he said.

"Over the past three days, two well-known IPTS have approached us and are interested in finding ways to increase Bumiputera students whereas many others have expressed interest in addressing the imbalance."

Declining to name the IPTS, he said the current efforts and interest by all parties in Bumiputera students' education was a good start and "a turning point in history".

"I also welcome Deputy Prime Minister's (Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) statement yesterday where he said there would be a consideration to increase funding to help students finance their education at these colleges," he said.

On the success of these efforts, he said: "On the issue of education, success is intangible. You can never say we are fully successful or not ... We will see with time."

On meritocracy, he said it was clear that Malay students' participation had increased in universities this year and although Umno Youth had defended the quota last year, the results showed Malays could compete.

"It might be a temporary measure because of the STPM but it is a challenge to ensure the numbers are maintained. We made the stand based on the position of Malays at that time and I am not too great a leader to say I might have been wrong," he said.

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