

Directive for Umno divisions

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PETALING JAYA: Umno leaders involved in the party's nation-wide exercise to form pro-term committees for its new tally of 190 divisions have been asked to maintain the status quo of the existing divisions.

This has dashed earlier expectations that the exercise, being done in connection with the redelineation of constituencies by the Election Commission (EC), might be used to bring new faces into the party.

Wanita Umno secretary Datuk Faridah Abu Hassan said the wing had been told not to make unnecessary changes to the leadership of the existing 165 divisions because the party wished to avoid misunderstandings or conflict with the general election so near.

"The key word here is stability. We have been asked to maintain the incumbents and any new faces will be for the 25 new divisions created by the redelineation," said Faridah in an interview.

"We have been told that if we want to make changes then it should be done at the next party election through the democratic process," she said.

She added that Umno's top leadership's priority in this exercise was to ensure that everyone settled down to work for the general election.

The instruction also applies to the main divisional committees and that of the Youth and

Puteri wings.

The divisional committees are to be dissolved and replaced by pro-term committees until the party election next year due to the formation of 25 new parliamentary constituencies.

In the exercise, the state Wanita chairmen will decide on the posts of pro-term division head and vice-head, who will in turn decide on the committee members.

The state lists will then go to Wanita chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, who will hand it over to party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Faridah said Rafidah had asked the state Wanita heads to submit their lists in handwritten form.

This is to prevent any "hanky-panky" because names have been known to go "missing or replaced" while they are being typed.

"Rafidah wants everything to go smoothly and sometimes handwriting is more reliable," said Faridah.

On June 24, the Dewan Rakyat approved the 25 new parliamentary seats, bringing the total from 194 to 219.

The new seats are in Penang (two), Perak. Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan and Malacca (one each), Pahang (three), Selangor (five), Johor (six) and Sabah (five).

The EC had also proposed the creation of an additional 63 state seats, bringing them to 567.