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Accept decision on pro-tem panels, say Umno leaders

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Umno Youth head Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein today labelled those who rejected the list of pro-tem committee chairmen endorsed by the supreme council as "traitors".

He said the list was finalised after lengthy deliberations, both in the Umno supreme council and management committee levels, and urged all members to accept it in good faith.

"Why talk about who is in the list and who is not? Everyone should talk about the next general election and how to strengthen the Barisan Nasional to ensure a landslide victory," said the Youth and Sports Minister.

Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz appealed to those who had been dropped not to let their personal feelings overcome them.

"They should not be disheartened if they have been dropped. I appeal to these members not to let this incident affect their faith and confidence in the party.

"What is important now is the unity of the party and we should work together to retake Terengganu and Kelantan from Pas," she said.

Last Saturday, Umno acting president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who is also the Prime Minister, announced the pro-tem committee line-up for all Umno divisions nationwide.

Among the divisions which saw changes was Kubang Pasu where its division head Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was replaced by former Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff.

Abdullah had said that Dr Mahathir had expressed his intention not to hold any party post when he stepped down as the Prime Minister and Umno president last month.

There were new heads in six other divisions. Most incumbent division heads were retained though some were picked to head new divisions created under the re-delineation exercise of parliamentary boundaries.

Kelantan had the highest number of changes, where four new division heads were named.

On Sunday, former Pasir Mas Umno division chief Datuk Ibrahim Ali said he was disappointed, shocked and upset that he was removed by the Umno supreme council three days before Hari Raya. He said that he did not expect the supreme council to remove him just like that, after all he had done.

Ibrahim, 52, was the division chief for the past 10 years and was replaced by Datuk Abdul Rahim Abd Rahman.

Yesterday, Abdullah said all members should accept the supreme council's decision on the pro-tem committee line-up as it was made after lengthy discussions.

Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, who is also Selangor Umno liaison committee chairman, said those nominated to hold senior positions in the pro-tem committees would not necessarily stand in the next general election.

The overriding factor, he added, was whether the person's candidacy would ensure a convincing victory for BN and the person's commitment to the party.

He added that the candidate for the election might not even come from the divisional pro-tem committee.

Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob said candidates for the general election in the State would be those who stood the highest chances

of winning big.

"If voters in a particular constituency want a technocrat, we will pick a technocrat. If they want a religious person, we will put a religious person. The bottom line is, this person must be acceptable and can win big," he added.

Jelebu Umno chief Datuk Seri Dr Rais Yatim urged members who had been dropped not to protest the decision of the supreme council, but accept the changes positively.

"Do not wallow in the past. When the time has come for change and the members want a new leadership, we must be ready to accept it and make way for new faces.

"What is important is the party's struggles and not one's personal interests," he said.