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Hishammuddin: Buck up or face the axe

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - Umno Youth head Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said he will not hesitate to drop any leader in the movement who was not committed to ensuring Barisan Nasional's victory in the next general election.

Hishammuddin said all Youth leaders, be they executive council members or those at State level, should buck up and organise more programmes to forge a closer relationship with the people.

"I can make the changes anytime I wish to, even tomorrow. However, before I do, I want to listen to the Youth leaders and find out what they have been doing.

"I want to know the activities they are planning to ensure the victory of Barisan Nasional candidates in the 2004 general election," Hishammuddin said after launching the Peace Malaysia programme at KLCC today, which was attended by Puteri Umno head Azalina Othman Said and MCA Youth head Datuk Ong Tee Keat .

Hishammuddin, who is also the Youth and Sports Minister, said there was no point in having Youth leaders who are not able to contribute to the party nor able to gauge support for Umno and also BN.

"We need Youth leaders who are on the move, especially now, as this year is a very crucial one since the general election is not too far away. We do not want leaders who cannot shoulder the responsibility.

"We have a big responsibility and we must prove our ability. There is no point in being a leader if one cannot help the party to win seats. This is more so in the case of Terengganu and Kelantan," he said.

Umno Youth leaders are expected to come up with complete plans and convince the leadership that their activities would help the party gain more votes and the support of the people.

Asked about the revamp of the Kelantan Umno liaison committee as announced by party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday, Hishammuddin said that it showed that one need not be a division head to be acknowledged by the party leadership.

"Most of those appointed yesterday are deputy division heads.

"What is important is that the party leadership has faith and trust in them and believes they will work hard for Umno."

On the Peace Malaysia programme, Hishammuddin said Umno Youth, with the support of other Youth associations and non-governmental organisations, would organise a campaign to collect the signatures of Malaysians who call on peace to prevail in the world.

He said the signatures would then be passed on to Dr Mahathir on Feb 23 to be conveyed to leaders attending the Non-Aligned Movement summit, to be held in Kuala Lumpur from Feb 20 to 25.

"We want to get our message across that there must be peace and stability in the world. The memorandum will carry the aspirations of Malaysians who want to see a harmonious situation prevailing all over the world."

He said the Peace Malaysia programme initiated by the movement would feature various events from today until the NAM meeting to generate greater public awareness of the various conflicts in the world today.

"We are concerned with developments in the world as safety and stability are under threat following the war against terror, led by the United States, which promotes pre-emptive strikes against suspected enemies. Unless pressure is applied on the superpowers, we can expect more wars."

