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National Service not political tool, says Hishammuddin

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Umno Youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said today the National Service programme was not a political vehicle for Umno and the Barisan Nasional.

He said the programme was aimed at promoting national integration among the races and had no political motives.

"There is no reason to politicise the National Service. Our intention is to unite the races," he added.

Hishammuddin, who is Youth and Sports Minister, said some youths in the country did not interact with other races and the programme was an effective tool to bring them together.

"In the current education system and economic condition, some quarters do not mix with others of different races," he said after chairing the Umno Youth executive council meeting at the party's headquarters in the Putra World Trade Centre.

Hishammuddin said the Youth and Sports Ministry would help recruit coordinators for the National Service programme.

On the postponement of the listing of the Federal Land Development Authority (Felda) on the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange, Hishammuddin said Umno Youth agreed with the decision as it provided an opportunity for all those involved to voice their concerns.

"One important aspect to consider is the social responsibilities of the organisation, especially towards the settlers' families."

He said Umno Youth and Felda's youth council would identify problems that could arise from the listing.

The plan to list Felda on the KLSE was announced in September by Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the then Prime Minister and Finance Minister, while presenting the 2004 Budget.

Felda's listing would enable it to generate funds from the capital market so that it would not have to depend on the Government for financial support.

On another matter, Hishammuddin said Umno Youth would invite the mufti of Jerusalem Sheikh Ekrima Said Sabri for a talk on the Palestinian struggle at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia in Skudai on Nov 15.