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`Party has pool of talented leaders'

reports on "Umno General Assembly 2003" by Noor Adzman Baharudin;  
THE smooth transition of power in Umno proves that the party has a pool of talented and capable leaders who have the potential to take over the leadership and continue upholding the country's interests.

Umno Youth head Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein said the movement fully supported and respected the transition of power from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to his deputy Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

"This transition of power should proceed smoothly without any political manoeuvring. As party members, we should be aware of our responsibilities and role in strengthening Umno.

"It is our responsibility to carry out the wishes and aspirations of Dr Mahathir and we will abide by the party's tradition and fully support the transition of power," said Hishammuddin in his keynote address at the opening of the Umno Youth assembly yesterday.

Hishammuddin said he did not wish to see Youth members blindly following certain quarters in using the transition of power issue as a polemic to jeopardise unity.

"Dr Mahathir decided to step down when Umno and the Government are in a strong position. The move reflects the high values of a respected leader who is truly committed to his people and also his struggle for the nation.

Hishammuddin said Umno Youth members had a big role to play in facing the various challenges and strengthening the party.

He said the party had gone through many challenging moments.

"Umno Youth has always moved together as a unit at anytime and anywhere to fight for our country, religion and race. Things are now different compared with the past as the role and contributions of Umno Youth are now more felt and appreciated.

"The recognition given would motivate us to carry out more successful programmes. We have proven ourselves with the Peace Malaysia gathering where we had assembled more than 1,500 non-governmental organisations and more than 200,000 people during our rally."

On religion, Hishammuddin said Malaysia was now recognised and acknowledged as a spokesman for other Islamic countries.

"We are happy with the recognition but we are sad with the present state of Islamic countries and also the March 20 incident, when the United States and its allies attacked Iraq."

On education, which Hishammuddin described as one of Umno Youth's main priority, he urged all quarters to join efforts to strengthen the national schools.

"The confidence among the people for national schools must be built. A new dimension has to be given in terms of finance, human resources and curriculum for the development for such schools.

"We want to see the national schools becoming centres of excellence not only in terms of academic but also physical development."

Hishammuddin also said that Umno Youth had formed a public complaints unit to address problems faced by the people on various issues.

He said that until April this year, the unit had received 512 complaints, out of which 70 per cent had been resolved.

On the next general election, Hishammuddin said: "This is our most important assembly before the election. I have constantly reminded all Youth leaders and members that programmes must be conducted with special focus on the election."

Hishammuddin said from last June till now, Umno Youth had recruited 56,609 new members while 102,162 new applications had been received.