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Umno can tap network and connections of its veterans

RECENTLY, after Umno celebrated its 57th anniversary, several party leaders from all levels discussing the role of party veterans expressed hope that the veterans would come forward to assist the party in facing new challenges.

Johor Baru Umno Youth chief Abu Talib Alias said younger members should regard the veterans as role models.

"Umno veterans were directly involved in the struggle for independence while the young leaders are now enjoying the fruits of independence.

"In turn, it is the responsibility of the younger generation of Umno members to continue with the party's struggle and not just concentrate on vying for positions."

He said Umno members should "join" the party through the "proper process", which is by joining the Youth movement first to establish a foundation for themselves at that level.

"The Umno youth movement is where we train future leaders," Abu Talib said.

Youth treasurer Wan Khairil Anuar Wan Ahmad said the veterans were the link to Umno's history because they were the ones who knew the unofficial history of the party.

"We may know about Malayan Union through our textbooks but these are the people who actually experienced the event."

On how the veterans could contribute to the party's preparations for the general election, he said they were a vital force that could help Umno's victory.

"They have the network and connections that can influence a large number of voters."

Umno vice-president Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib said the veterans had never been shunned by the current members.

"Only last year the party president (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad) had a gathering with Umno veterans at the divisional level," he said.

"If a function was to held in the kampungs, veterans would always be invited."

Muhammad said at the State level, the Association of Former Elected Representatives (Mubarak) worked closely with Umno and the Barisan Nasional.

However, he stressed that these veterans did not need an invitation to attend party functions as they had in the past come forward voluntarily.

"Umno is all about perjuangan (struggle). If we hear about a party event, we should come forward and show our support."

Wanita Umno information chief Datin Paduka Seripah Noli said the movement would hold a Malam Jasamu Dikenang next month to honour veterans at the divisional level.

"We want to honour them. We want to organise events that can get together people of their age group."

Seripah said veterans were a source of information and knowledge because they had more experience.

"Look at Tan Sri Aishah Ghani (former Wanita Umno chief). Every time she speaks people listen."

Wanita Umno treasurer Datuk Azizah Samad said another event which was largely attended by veterans recently was a quran recital and nasyid event at Taman Salak Jaya on May 17.

It was organised by her Wanita Seputeh division.

"Some of the veterans who had joined Opposition parties also turned up to show their support."