

Muhyiddin: Umno is race-based but not racist
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As Umno - the oldest party in the country - is fighting to keep up with the times, they are now calling for inclusiveness, urging the general assembly delegates to tone down on the racial rhetoric.

"The race-based politics practised by Umno is not a form of racial or racist party. Racist politics means that we only prioritise the interest of our own race and then condemn the needs of other races," said the party deputy president Muhyiddin Yassin (*left*).

He was speaking at the joint opening ceremony of the party's Wanita, Youth and Puteri wings ahead of their general assembly which starts tomorrow.

"It has always been the Umno struggle to fight for the rights of the Malays as protected in the constitution and at the same time, respect the rights and the needs of other communities.

"Umno has never monopolised political power and the economic opportunities for the Malays only. The party leaders realise that sharing the political power and economic opportunities with other races are the best way to create unity and stability in a multi-cultural nation," he said.

Calling Umno an 'inclusive' party, he also assured that no race or communities will be left behind in the road to nation-building.

"To the other races, Umno will still respect the rights of the other races as enshrined in the constitution.

"As a Malay political party which is inclusive, and through the record of Umno struggles thus far, Umno will ensure that no other races are left behind in reaping the fruits of development and success of this country," he said.

'Stop the racial battle cries'

He also appealed to the delegates not to be caught up in the racial rhetoric of others.

"Although the race relations in Malaysia in generally good, we can still hear voices questioning the rights of the Malays and bumiputeras, as well as the lawful rights of the other races.

"If not handled well, this situation will cause rise to a perception among the various races that their rights are slowly eroding," he said.

"The racial debate in society can complicate matters and can provoke and fan the racial flames. We definitely would not want the spark of racial hatred explode, destroying the unity and stability that we have worked so long for," he said.

"All of the distrust between races must stop. The racial debate must stop. Not today, not tomorrow, not the day after, but now. Let there be no one or any group question the special rights of the Malays, or of the races as protected in the constitution," he said.

Scorecard for wings

At the mean time, Muhyiddin also suggested for a 'scorecard' for the wings to evaluate the leadership.

The scorecard will see leaders evaluated by their own members once every two years to gauge their impact and effectiveness in a more orderly and systematic manner.

"Those who show high standing will be given due honour and recognition. Take this as an initiative as one of our genuine efforts in improving the party image as well as bolstering the public trust in the party," he said.

In a move to quell the wings' dissatisfaction over the party's secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor's (*right*) recent interview hitting out at the movements, Muhyiddin also sang praises of the movements.

"The Wanita, Youth and Puteri wings have always been faithful to the party struggles and are always read to serve the party.

"You all never tire from raising the party flag in every battlefield. In every elections and party programs, you have been the main machinery," he said.

Tengku Adnan, in a previous exclusive interview with *Berita Harian*, had said that the Puteri and Pemuda members are self-serving and only interested in positions.

At the meantime, influential former Perlis mufti Mohd Asri Zainul Abidin was also spotted at the function.

It was previously speculated that he would be joining the party.

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