

**Pressure mounts against quotas in Umno polls**  
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Sabah Umno deputy information head Shafie Apdal has become the latest to join a growing bandwagon of Umno supreme council members in favour of abolishing the quota system that determines who can contest top posts in the party polls. MCPX

Speaking after his first briefing at the unity, culture, arts and heritage ministry in Putrajaya today, Shafie said the spirit behind the quota system has been to ensure only that serious candidates are nominated.

mohd shafie apdal "I still remember this because I was there when this was amended. It was based on the assumption then that members were not wise enough to decide on who was the right guy to nominate then. And we did not want any Tom, Dick and Harry to offer themselves as candidates.

"But I think (as vice-president Muhyiddin Yassin has indicated) the current procedure needs to be amended to suit the demands of the members."

He is confident that changes to the quota system would encourage more capable members to step up as leaders.

This, he said, should not be only in contests for the top two positions, but also those for other positions like three vice-presidents, secretary-general and members of the supreme council.

"And the newcomers can perhaps strengthen the party. I'm quite sure that the members have become wise enough to decide who they want to lead the party and (therefore the) country," Shafie told reporters.

Although, the matter was not debated during the supreme council meeting last Thursday, he feels certain that it will be discussed in due course because it affects the party.

"I'm of the same opinion with Muhyiddin that there is a need to change the quota. I feel that, under the current circumstances, there shouldn't be any worries about contests. Umno is a mature party."

**Khair Toyo: Leaders should not fear contests**

khair toyo selangor bn pc 120308 happyContacted today, former Selangor Menteri Besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo said leaders should not fear contests if they are strong.

"Abolishing the quota is in line with a more open practice. Furthermore, if we (leaders) are strong, we should not be afraid of ending the quota system," he said.

But he also pointed out the need to go back to grassroots to check if this is what members really want.

Another supreme council member, Mohamed Khaled Nordin, has also backed the proposal to

abolish the quota system.

“(This) will take the party back to the way it was, when elections for leaders were more open,” he said.

shahrir samad  
Outspoken supreme council member Shahrir Abdul Samad also supported the proposal, saying “we are proud to say that Johor Bahru Umno has been consistent in its stand against the quota”.

The Johor Bahru division was among seven that had opposed the condition set by previous Umno president Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1988.

The system was implemented after Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah’s failed attempt to challenge Dr Mahathir for the presidency in 1987.

muhyiddin yassin and farmers breeders and agriculture  
Muhyiddin had earlier explained why the restriction should be lifted: “The nomination quota will encourage money politics as those who want to contest will buy enough nominations.

“It also creates an unhealthy political culture as some of the delegates might not nominate someone if it is viewed as disrespectful or rebellion against the leadership,” he was quoted as saying in press reports.

### **Dissenting views**

However, resurrected Umno politician Muhammad Muhd Taib, the party information chief, has reportedly said there is nothing wrong with the system since it was introduced some 20 years ago.

muhammad muhd taib  
“The quota was established to ensure only genuine candidates could vie for party posts. If the quota is removed, anyone can contest despite not getting the support of the majority at the divisional level,” he was quoted as saying.

Puteri Umno chief Noraini Ahmad said the quota ensures that candidates will have strong grassroots support before challenging for positions.

“Only those who are capable of breaking the barrier will have more credibility to challenge the president.”

noh omar  
Selangor Umno leader Noh Omar said the quota system actually reflects the transparency and fairness of the party.

He said that if anyone achieves the quota, it would mean that the grassroots want change. And an election (for president and deputy president) would be conducted based on a needs basis and not for any other reason.

Meanwhile, Umno deputy president Najib Abdul Razak stayed clear of the debate.

On the sidelines of an event at Bursa Malaysia today, he said “my personal opinion is not important at this stage”.

umno 2007 najib and umno 061107  
“I see that there are different views on the matter.

Therefore, let us study first the effects of the system that has been implemented and the views of the members whether to review it," he added.

"The final decision will be made by the supreme council (Umno's top policy making body)," he said.

### **Need to call a party EGM**

Under the party constitution, a candidate wishing to contest the president's post must obtain nominations from at least 30 percent of the 193 divisions (58 nominations).

Challengers require 20 percent (38) for the deputy president's post, 10 percent (19) for an elected vice-president's post, and 5 percent (10) for a seat on the supreme council.

umno party post polls quotaMuhyiddin, who also chairs Umno's constitution and rules committee, said there are two ways the quota system can be ended.

"The first is for the supreme council to instruct me to make the amendment and for it to be endorsed by an extraordinary general meeting (EGM)," he said in a press report today.

"The second way is for more than half of the states or Umno divisions to ask for an EGM to be held to amend the constitution."

With the party general assembly is set for Dec 16-20 and the branch meetings are slated to be completed by Aug 24, any proposal to amend the constitution or hold an EGM must be submitted before the divisions hold their meetings from Oct 9-Nov 9.

The nomination process will kick off during branch and divisional meetings, unless there are no contests this time around for the top two posts.

Abdullah, 68, has claimed a mandate to rule despite the unprecedented election losses, but observers say he is on borrowed time.

Senior lawmaker Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, 71, had said he would challenge Abdullah's leadership if he received enough support.

Razaleigh has also called for an EGM to discuss the poll setback but he has received lukewarm support from Umno leaders. He may get his wish should there be an EGM held to abolish the quota system.