

**Hishammuddin not defending Umno Youth post**  
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Education Minister Hishammuddin Hussein paved the way for a contest for the Umno Youth chief seat when he announced his intention not to defend his position at the party polls this December. MCPX

hishammuddin hussein pc 030408 03He however refused to confirm if he would be contesting for one of the three vice-president posts, stating that he was leaving it to party members and delegates.

Hishammuddin told reporters that he was announcing his intention early so that others may vie for the seat in December. He has been the head of the youth wing since 2000.

Hishammuddin also refused to comment if he would back Umno Youth exco member Mukhriz Mahathir for the post. Mukhriz had previously said that he would vie for the coveted post if Hishammuddin was not defending it.

Other potential contestants include Hishammuddin's deputy, Khairy Jamaluddin, and former Selangor menteri besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo.

"Yesterday, Mukhriz and Dr Khir offered themselves to lead Umno Youth if I were to step down.

"After due consideration, the time has come for me to state my intentions. I've already led the Youth section for 10 years and the time has come for me to move on and let others lead the movement," Hishammuddin said at the press conference after releasing the ministry's report card this afternoon.

"I'm not relinquishing my position now but I'm announcing my intentions early so that people can move forward," he explained.

"From now until December, don't anyone think that I'm not Ketua Pemuda cause I'm still the chief. I'm Ketua Pemuda until we go through the normal process of party elections," he added.

**Khairy not automatic choice**

On his plans in December, the two-term Youth chief chose to keep mum although he has no intentions to quit politics either. The party polls will be held from Dec 16 to 20.

hishammuddin hussein khir toyo mukhriz khairy jamaluddin umnoWhen asked if he was indirectly endorsing Mukhriz for the position, Hishammuddin said: "No. I'm not directly or indirectly supporting anyone. We'll let the delegates decide."

On the question of his deputy succeeding him, Hishammuddin said: "It's not for me to decide. I can only decide for myself and that is the issue for the Youth wing to look at in order to move forward".

He also denied that it was a tradition for the deputy to take over the chief's place when a vacancy arises.

"Not necessarily from a 'tradition' standpoint. It is also clear that the grassroots hold the power and want a say on who they want to lead them," said Hishammuddin.

Meanwhile, when contacted Khir said that he was taking feedback from the grassroots and will be making an appropriate announcement soon.

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