

Party 'decides on succession, not elitist leaders'

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A top Umno Youth leader has come out openly to echo party veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah in arguing that talks of a succession plan is 'unconstitutional'. MCPX

"According to our (Umno) constitution, the question of succession is not up to the president, it's up to the entire party," said Kamarulzaman Kamdias, a member of the Umno Youth executive committee.

kamarulzaman kamdiasKamarulzaman (left), who is also deputy chairman of Umno Youth membership bureau, did not mince his words in calling for the party to hold democratic elections.

"The presidency is not a royal crown to be handed on. It is a democratic mandate that has to be given by the members through party elections."

Last week, Razaleigh said party president Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's talk of a power transition was unconstitutional as far as Umno rules are concerned.

Met after attending a briefing for Barisan Nasional parliamentarians in Istana Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Razaleigh said the plan would deny Umno members their constitutional right to vote for whoever they see fit to head the party.

"Only the party election can decide who will head Umno. Do not invalidate the party constitution," said the Gua Musang MP when a reporter told him that the party supreme council has decided that Umno's deputy president Najib Razak will automatically succeed Abdullah.

Party elites can't decide succession

Razaleigh has stated his intention to challenge Abdullah in the party's December polls but faces a major hurdle in obtaining the required 30 percent divisional nominations to qualify for the contest.

Meanwhile, Abdullah, who is also prime minister, has vowed to defend his post should he be challenged. It has been speculated that he would hand over the party leadership and the prime minister post to his deputy, Najib Razak, before his term expires in three years.

Kamarulzaman said that the succession plan should not be decided by a small group of party elites.

"Our constitution provides for orderly and democratic elections to renew our leadership every three years. Those election have already been delayed by more than a year.

"The membership of the entire party, not a small group of elitist (leaders), should now determine who stays and who goes."

He urged Abdullah to publicly announce his decision should "he intend to hang on until 2010 or 2012".

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