

Opposition: PM's transition plan a 'stunt'
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's transition-of-power plan is nothing more than a stunt to avoid being challenged for the Umno presidency, claimed DAP leader Charles Santiago.
MCPX

Santiago, who is the MP for Klang, said Abdullah's announcement to step down in 2010 is to create an impression of stability within the beleaguered party, which will hold its elections in December.

umno special briefing abdullah ahmad badawi announce resignation date 100708 2"Abdullah needs time to quell the political bickering within Umno, regain public confidence after the opposition denied the ruling coalition government its two-thirds majority in Parliament and calm the nerves of jittery investors.

"By agreeing to hand over power to (deputy premier) Najib Abdul Razak, Abdullah has cleverly tried to ensure that there would be no contest for the top two Umno positions, as his political future is in limbo," added the opposition politician in a statement.

Santiago also criticised Abdullah for not heeding the calls for him to resign immediately after the shocking results of the 12th general election.

"He has ignored the calls to quit, which largely came from within Umno, to bear responsibility for the humiliating defeat of the Barisan Nasional in the March polls.

"Abdullah has also been under intense pressure to set a timetable for power transition, to put an end to political infighting by Najib's supporters who are clamouring for the deputy premier to take over the leadership," he said.

Razaleigh factor

charles santiagoSantiago (right) viewed the transition plan as an attempt to halt the "verbal sniping" between the premier and Umno veteran Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who has been vying for the post of Umno chief since 1987.

"Abdullah must be hopeful that his decision will deny Razaleigh the 30 percent of nominations needed to contest, as stipulated in the Umno constitution," he said.

He also described the transition as undemocratic as it is a "devious way" to stop aspiring candidates from mounting a challenge for the top two posts in Umno.

"Party members must be allowed to choose their president and deputy president. The current practice of appointing the top two leaders only goes to show the scarcity of democracy within Umno," he said.

Santiago also questioned whether Najib would be suitable for presidency given the numerous allegations linking him to murdered Mongolian national Altantunya Shaariibuu. Najib has denied all such allegations.

The DAP MP said Abdullah has consistently brushed aside calls for an inquiry to investigate possible links between Najib and the case.

"Instead, he has told the nation that his deputy would take over the reins of power in 2010.

"This in itself reflects that Abdullah must resign immediately and let the people choose the country's next prime minister," he added.

'Sly tactic'

salahuddin ayub 01PAS Youth chief Salahuddin Ayub (left) also referred to the transition plan as a "sly tactic" by Abdullah to avoid a contest.

In a statement, Salahuddin said the move will enable Abdullah to combine forces with Najib to flush out Razaleigh.

He said Abdullah has lost the people's confidence, and that this has worsened after he failed to address the impact of the fuel price hikes, which has led to increasing inflation.

"The loss of confidence also involves Umno members and BN component parties like SAPP and now Abdullah is looking for ways to reduce his enemies in and out of Umno.

"Outside Umno, (PKR de facto leader) Anwar Ibrahim has been winning the trust of the rakyat to topple Abdullah," he said.

"Razaleigh has announced his decision to battle for the Umno presidency. Najib remains silent. And (former premier Dr) Mahathir (Mohamad) goes on convincing the public and Umno grassroots to walk out," he added.

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