

**Ku Li attacks Abdullah-Najib pact, it 'fools no one'**  
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Former finance minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah today attacked Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for insisting on going through with the power transition pact made with his deputy, Najib Abdul Razak.

Better known by his short name of Ku Li, Razaleigh was echoing calls made by Umno vice-president Muhyiddin Yassin, who warned the party was in danger of losing its grip on voters and other component parties in the Barisan Nasional coalition.

"The leadership of the party has retreated into the fantasy world of a 'transition plan' which rides roughshod over the party's constitution and the rights of its members.

"This risible attempt to treat public office and party trust as a private bequest between two individuals, one of whom wishes to hold office beyond his democratic mandate and the other to ascend without one, and the continuing effort to force feed the country with this notion, fools no one," Ku Li said in a statement.

"Instead, and against background of rampant money politics, it kills the public's hope of national renewal via Umno. Behind the babble about a 'transition plan' the prime minister continues to be subverted by members of his own cabinet and subjected to thinly cloaked power plays to force his resignation. Given Umno's core role in national politics, this is a dangerous state of affairs."

Ku Li, 71, and the outspoken Muhyiddin are seen as among interested contenders for the top post in Umno, the country's most powerful political party.

His chances of winning the Umno presidency, currently held by the prime minister, is currently seen as slim by political watchers, although they acknowledged his experience and famed even-handedness in dealings.

Abdullah and Najib had in July agreed on a pact, that has since been approved by the Umno supreme council, whereby the premier would pass over the top job in the country together with the party presidency to Najib in June 2010.

The controversial pact, which came in for a pounding when it was first unveiled, has come under renewed attack ahead of crucial divisional annual meetings due to begin on Oct 9.

Pressure on Abdullah to quit in favour of his deputy earlier than the 2010 deadline has been raised.

The prime minister moved quickly last week to shore up his position by surrendering his coveted finance portfolio to Najib, a sweetener observers said was aimed at pacifying and maintaining his deputy's loyalty.

A source told Malaysiakini yesterday that Abdullah and Najib have once again agreed to stick with their original plan to go for the top two posts as a team.

If they did so, analysts have said the duo would be tough to beat.

Abdullah,68, has also been bombarded by some party leaders, including members of his own cabinet, for being undemocratic by insisting that the top two posts be uncontested.

"This resort to a 'transition plan' betrays a disturbing failure to grasp the meaning and purpose of public office. In the more mature society into which we aspire to grow, persons who demonstrate and moreover propagate such disregard for constitutional and democratic process would long ago have been disqualified from public life, let alone from national leadership," said Ku Li.

The Kelantan-based prince had previously promised party members he would throw open voting to the grassroots by allowing each member to vote directly for the candidate of his choice.

Currently, nominations for top party posts are determined by delegates at the division level.

### **Come together**

Ku Li also warned of the growing challenge from the opposition.

"The opposition has made undeniable gains in the number of parliamentarians it commands.

"Beyond the hype and inflation, and regardless of whether Pakatan Rakyat now has 'the numbers' to command a majority, what we cannot doubt is that support for the governing majority continues to erode, and that this erosion continues so long as there is no hope of real change in the type of leadership Umno provides," he said.

"There is now a credible threat that the present government may at some time fall by a vote of no confidence, or by some otherwise constitutionally legitimate demonstration of parliamentary majority," he added.

Ku Li also urged all parties to rise above partisan politics and hold "honest discussion" to lead the nation out from its current doldrums.

Otherwise, the current political impasse will not only threaten the country's economic health but may create "long-term instability and destruction" if left unattended.

"Our impasse occurs at a time of heightened economic, political and security challenges. The global economy faces the prospect of a meltdown on a scale last seen in the Great Depression of the last century. As a trading nation, we are strongly exposed to its effects," said Ku Li, who is also the Gua Musang MP.

"We need to come together to find unity and direction out of this dangerous situation. In doing so, we might turn our crisis into an opportunity and renew our unity and sense of direction as Malaysia."