

**Umno constitutional changes to 'empower', says Hisham**  
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**Tarani Palani**

Umno Vice-President Hisammuddin Hussein today revealed preliminary suggestions on amendments to Umno's constitution for what he hopes will help transform the party towards being more accessible to the grassroots.

Among suggestions made were amendments to the party's elections laws to allow the 3.4 million grassroots members to directly elect the party's top leadership.

"The party's leadership is decided by 2,554 (divisional leaders) now. The issue is how we are to expand involvement of members.

hishammuddin hussein home ministry 140409 talking "Whether (through) the 60, 000 members at the divisional level or the 3.4 million members at the branch level," he told a press conference at the Home Ministry in Putrajaya.

Hisammuddin, who heads Umno's Constitution Amendment Technical Committee, hopes that the proposals could be tabled at Umno's special assembly meet in October and take effect immediately.

The committee is also looking into conducting simultaneous elections for all levels of the party as suggested by Umno President Najib Abdul Razak during the party's annual general meeting in March.

Hishammuddin, however, pointed out that the issue of logistics would have to be taken into consideration for this move.

**'Expanding ability, rights'**

"If (branch) elections are to be conducted simultaneously in one day, with 3.4 million members, it will not be logistically possible.

"But the suggestion to look at it for the divisional level which only involves 60,000 members [...] that probably we can do simultaneously."

umno 2007 assembly 071107 crowdsOne of the other measures that the committee is looking into is extending voting rights to Umno-linked NGOs which are currently classified as 'joint members' but without voting rights.

"These are all suggestions. This is a technical committee [...] we can only make proposals.

"At the moment we are making proposals to expanding the ability and rights of Umno members. But the intention to empower them members is very clear."

The committee is set to meet again within a fortnight, he added.

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