

Democracy alive within Umno, says DPM
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By Lisa J. Ariffin

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 8 — Umno has never issued a gag order on members to voice their opinions within the party, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said today.

“We have never stopped anyone from voicing their opinions. There has been no circular issued to Umno leaders to tell them to keep their mouths shut,” Muhyiddin (picture) told reporters today following a dialogue with Teach for Malaysia 2012 fellows here.

“Sometimes, they say more than they should,” he said, prompting laughter from the crowd.

He was responding to reports this morning on Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who said he joined civil society NGO Angkatan Amanah Merdeka (Amanah) as he found there was no space to voice his opinions within his political party Umno.

However, Muhyiddin said Umno has always provided adequate space within the party for opinions and views.

“The democratic system in Umno is alive,” he said.

“Many forums are available besides the bureaus that have been formed... There is space in the party.”

While acknowledging this, Muhyiddin said the party would not prevent members from joining NGOs of their choice.

“It’s in their interest to focus on things they are interested in, we are not going to stop them,” he said.

This morning, Tengku Razaleigh, who is popularly known as Ku Li, was quoted as saying: “For me there is no space in Umno.”

The Kelantan prince and the man who was once expected to be prime minister claimed that the democratic space in the ruling party has shrunk compared with previous years.

He added that he was told that to even speak in the upcoming Umno general assembly, one would have to be “approved” first.

However, Muhyiddin said this was because “many people want to voice their opinions. If we allow each one to talk, the general assembly will take longer than a month”.

“That is why we choose state representatives. These representatives will meet with other state members and bring up their opinions during the meeting,” he said.

“This has been practised by Umno all the while, there is no gag order on any members to voice their opinions.”

Amanah, which was only recently formally registered with the Registrar of Societies, was

formed to promote unity and inclusiveness.

Ku Li also said he still had faith in Umno and would remain an Umno member.

The multiracial Amanah leadership comprises members from both Barisan Nasional and Pakatan Rakyat.

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