

Umno Polls Enter New Territory
Bernama
30 May, 2013
By Mohd Hisham Abdul Rafar

KUALA LUMPUR, May 30 (Bernama) -- For the first time in its history, Umno, the biggest party for the Malays, will be seeing polls for its top leadership of a different kind this year.

This is due to amendments to the party constitution in 2009 which has empowered more of its members to have their say unlike before when it was only the delegates to the party's general assembly who had that power.

As a result of the amendments, the following changes were made:

- * 146,500 grassroots members will elect the top leadership as compared to 2,500 members previously. The grassroots members will also directly elect the divisional leadership.
- * End to the quota system which has opened the doors to more members to contest top posts with the minimum condition being that they must have been a supreme council member or committee member (AJK) at the division level for one term.
- * The requirement to contest an AJK post is that the candidate must have been an Umno member for three years.

Under the old quota system, a candidate needed to get a certain number of nominations from Umno's 191 divisions before being eligible to contest a particular top post(see below).

- * President - 30 per cent or backing from at least 57 divisions
- * Deputy President - 20 per cent or 38 divisions
- * Vice-President - 10 per cent or 19 divisions
- * Supreme Council Member - five per cent or 10 divisions
- * Youth Chief - 20 per cent or 38 divisions
- * Wanita Chief - 20 per cent or 38 divisions
- * Puteri Chief - 20 per cent or 38 divisions

As for the post of vice-president in the three wings (Youth, Wanita and Puteri), contestants must get the backing of 15 per cent of the total divisions (minimum 28 divisions).

This has raised questions as to how the polls this time will play out.

According to political analyst Dr Ibrahim Ghafar, with the doing away of the quota system, people now will be watching whether the top posts will be contested by real contenders or it will be a "free for all" race.

"If the latter were to happen, the polls will turn out to be a farce and will be seen as a "circus show", more so with people having agendas to tarnish Umno's image relishing the

opportunity.

"Hopefully, this doesn't happen because Umno is a sacred party to the Malays. But one can never say because the "filtering blocks" have now been removed," he said, adding that he was of the opinion that some kind of quota system should still be in place.

"What happens if 100 or 1,000 members offer themselves? Won't it be a headache for the election committee. If this happens Umno will be a laughing stock," he said in voicing his fears on unwanted things happening.

Admitting it was a little late in the day to make his opinion known, he nevertheless believed that Umno's election committee still had space and time to put some checks in place without upsetting the democratic process.

Another aspect of the amendments is the issue of money politics now that the voter base has been increased 58 fold.

Political analyst Che Hamdan Che Mohd Razali said the scourge could now be reduced "as there were far too many people in the game".

"This is in line with what Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak wanted. But just like all things new, like the constitutional amendments, it will still take time to eradicate fully money politics," he said.

He said it could be a good step to rid the problem as long as there was strict monitoring while the huge number of voters this time by itself acted as a check and balance (on money politics).

The political science lecturer at Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Dungun, Terengganu added that the amendments would also put an end to accusations of cronyism and nepotism in Umno.

Umno's polls which were postponed due the 13th general election, which was held on May 5, must be held this year.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2013 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v7/newsindex.php?id=953022>