

**Open Party Election Shows Democracy Is Alive In Umno - Mukhriz
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JITRA, Sept 21 (Bernama) -- The open system which allowed Umno members to contest any party post currently, showed democracy in Umno was alive and the party was bold enough to change, said Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir.

He said the new system implemented for the first time, freed Umno from being restrained by the old system of using quota to contest, which discouraged members of the younger generation and professional group from active involvement.

The election system was implemented, following a party constitutional amendment in 2009.

"I think Umno will continue to be relevant. The presence of many members offering themselves as candidates at division level will create history through capable division and national leaders to strengthen Umno from the grassroots.

"The Malay professional group, which previously felt constrained to be involved actively, should now come forward to offer themselves as candidates," Mukhriz told reporters here Saturday.

Mukhriz, who is Kedah Umno Liaison chief, was met after submitting his nomination form to contest as Jerlun Umno division head at Dewan Wawasan.

"I welcome the religious scholar group with their credentials in religion to offer themselves. They should not take the attitude of isolating themselves from the political wave to help Umno eradicate the spread of Syiah teachings," he said.

The menteri besar hoped more from the younger generation would contest for posts at division committees to raise issues, apart from rejuvenating the party.

Meanwhile, Kedah Umno Liaison deputy chairman Datuk Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah said the upcoming party election had sufficient openings to accommodate new faces to empower the party.

"We will not be surprised if many eligible new faces win the election as it is the era of transformation sought by Umno. Nonetheless, I hope candidates would brand themselves and not sabotage or run down their competitors," he said.

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