

Lawmakers approve of Mukhriz challenge, say Umno needs fresh blood to attract young

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Umno needs to regenerate and Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir's (pic) decision to contest for the vice-presidency post should be applauded rather than be seen as a move that will wreck and divide the party, said its lawmakers.

Pulai Umno division head Datuk Nur Jazlan Mohamed said Mukhriz's entry into the contest is what the party needed - to inject some youth into the contest.

"I'm certain the grassroots are happy with his decision. He is young, and the younger ones need to be brave enough to vie for the higher posts in the party," he told The Malaysian Insider today.

Nur Jazlan, who is contesting to win a seat on the supreme council, viewed Mukhriz's move as a result of the support he received from the grassroots who wanted younger leaders to be given prominence in the party.

He also rejected the suggestion that the Kedah MB's entry would cause divisions in the party.

"Let us not be rigid and be shackled by such thinking, Umno is a democratic party. This is our strength, let the delegates decide who they want as their leaders," he added.

Mukhriz's decision has created a stir as Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Razak had over the last few months sent word that the current three vice-presidents should be maintained.

The incumbents are Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein and Rural Development Minister Datuk Seri Shafie Apdal.

Besides Mukhriz, the other two in the race are Felda chairman Tan Sri Isa Samad and former Malacca chief minister Datuk Seri Ali Rustam.

Kedah Umno secretary Datuk Othman Aziz , who is also the Jerlun MP, said Mukhriz contesting would help address an image problem the party was grappling with, that it is no longer a party of choice for the young.

"The issue with Umno now is getting the support of the younger generation. This is the trend based on the recent elections, therefore someone like Mukhriz will be able to attract the younger voters if he wins," he added.

Umno supreme council member Dr Mohd Puad Zarkashi viewed Mukhriz's entry as giving Umno delegates a wider choice of candidates.

Dr Puad, in describing Mukhriz as someone who was talented, polite and devoid of any political baggage, said that it was also proof that Umno had alternatives and options for its future leadership.

"I don't want to be seen as bias. The three current VPs came to see me at my division to get our support. Since I'm vying for a supreme council seat, I also need their support.

"But I welcome Mukhriz into the VP race," he added.

Dr Puad also pointed out that VPs represented the future of Umno's top leadership. - September 20, 2013.

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