

# Election fever intensifies in Kedah

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Many deputy division heads aim for the highest rung in ladder

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**PETALING JAYA** Tues The heat is on in Kedah for the upcoming Umno divisional elections with many deputy division heads aiming for the highest rung on the ladder

Contest is inevitable for most divisional posts as well as in the Youth wing The waters are calmer in the Wanita camp as fewer aspirants are actually coming out to challenge the incumbents

Twelve divisions will see contests for the top post They are Alor Star Baling Jerlun Langkawi Merbok Padang Serai Padang Terap Pendang Pokok Sena Sik Sungai Petani and Yan

A no contest stance has been taken by three divisions with two wanting to retain their division leaders and another to make way for the menteri besar

Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will be returned unopposed as Kubang Pasu division head and Culture Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir will retain his top post in Kulim Bandar Baru

Kuala Kedah division head Datuk Zakaria Said is expected to vacate his seat to make way for Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zam

Zakaria will go for the number two post against three other aspirants

In Kubang Pasu the incumbent deputy division head former menteri besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff will face former political secretary to the prime minister Datuk Saad Man

Meanwhile the sunny facade in the Kulim Bandar Baru division is

shrouded by dark clouds as internal feud is said to worsen the already existing crack in the division

Sources say the division's Youth head Azimi Daim made an eleventh hour decision last week to take on incumbent Hussain Abdul Rahman for the deputy division head post However the battle is expected to be to Azimi's advantage because of his good track record in the division

Azimi who is also a party supreme council member will at the same time defend his division Youth head's post against newcomer Jasni Desa

In Alor Star division head Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah is facing a challenge from his deputy Dr Fauzi Abdul Hamid who is also in the running for the number two post

Baling division head Datuk Raja Ariffin Raja Sulaiman is said to be facing stiff competition from Datuk Zamol Md Isa who is giving up his post as deputy to concentrate on this contest

A three corner fight will transpire in Jerlun as incumbent Datuk Hanafi Ramli is expected to face his deputy Abdul Rahman Ariffin and division vice head Abu Hassan Shariff

Abdul Rahman and Abu Hassan are both going for the deputy's post They will be challenged by Abu Hassan Hashim

In Padang Serai deputy division head Yusuf Harun will give up his post to contest against incumbent Mohd Hadzir Ismail for the top post

The Sungai Petani division will also see a three way tussle

Incumbent Ibrahim Mustafa

will be taken on by his deputy Mat Akhair Shafie and Sungai Petani MP Datuk Mahadzir Khir

In Pendang incumbent Datuk Othman Abdul is expected to face the division vice head Md Rozai Shafian Rozai is said to be on an all out effort by also running for deputy as well as defending his current post

Youth wing leaders are also expected to join in the fray for the top post in at least two divisions

In Merbok Youth head Mokhzani Mahathir is giving up his post to take on division head Datuk Arzmi Hamid

Meanwhile Kedah state assembly speaker Datuk Badruddin Amiruddin will face stiff challenge in a three way tussle expected in the Yan division

Badruddin the current division

head will face division Youth head Datuk Suhaimi Abdullah who had exceeded the age limit for the Youth movement and newcomer Radzi Abdul Rahman

In Sik religious adviser to the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Abdul Hamid Othman is said to be facing a challenge from Dr Wan Azmi Wan Ariffin who is also nominated for the deputy and vice head posts

However sources say Wan Azmi is likely to win in the contest against the incumbent as Abdul Hamid has yet to receive any nomination for the post

In Langkawi incumbent and MP for the area Datuk Abu Bakar Taib will be challenged by former division secretary Fadzil Talib

In Pokok Sena state exco member Fadzil Hanafi will take on incumbent Ahmad Lebai Sudin

Another three way tussle is expected in Padang Terap as incumbent Datuk Dr Afifuddin Omar will be challenged by state exco member Datuk Ghazali Ibrahim and Datuk Syed Sobri Syed Hashim who is trying to make a comeback

Talks are circulating among state Umno members that money is being used to fish for nominations and votes

Insiders say money usage is rampant especially among aspiring newcomers who have yet to have a track record

Meanwhile in Perlis two of the three divisions will not see any contest as Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim remains as Arau division head while Rural Development Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid retains his post in Padang Besar

However a three corner fight is expected in the Kangar division following the resignation of Tan Sri Dr Abdul Hamid Pawanteh who wanted to give way to younger leaders