

08/07/2002

Selangor MB expected to make it a three-cornered fight for MYC post

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - A three-cornered fight for the Malaysian Youth Council's top post is shaping up, with a Menteri Besar making an unprecedented bid to head the country's largest youth umbrella body.

Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khir Toyo is believed to have offered himself for the post of president. The council will hold its annual general meeting from July 19-21.

Khir, an Umno Youth national Exco member, has indicated his willingness to lead the MYC but wished to avoid a contest for the top post.

The other two candidates are incumbent vice-presidents Abdullah Abu Bakar from the Felda Youth Council and Norizan Sharif of Kedah Youth.

MYC two-term president Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah is not seeking re-election as he has exceeded the age limit. The council's constitution stipulates the president and Exco members to be 40 years and below.

Nominations are fixed for July 20 with voting by the 347 delegates from 35 affiliates to take place the next day.

MYC has 39 youth bodies under it, but four are associate affiliates with no voting rights.

Besides the president's post, 20 other positions are up for grabs - permanent chairman, deputy permanent chairman, deputy president, vice-presidents (three positions), secretary-general, treasurer and 12 Exco posts.

However, the posts of deputy president, now held by Sawarak Youth leader Wan Liz Ozman Wan Omar, and treasurer will not be contested.

Sources said "talks" to prevent a contest for the president's post was actively being pursued.

The post has been filled without contest since the 1980s. The only contest was in 1994 when incumbent Datuk Suhaimi Ibrahim was challenged by Yusri Ahmad, who failed in his bid.

Dr Khir's offer has triggered intense debate among MYC members.

The Menteri Besar, said a delegate, possessed all the credentials to lead MYC but many were not comfortable with his intention to contest as he was regarded as a parachute candidate.

"Many prefer the new president to come from within the council, from the current crop of leaders. The Selangor Menteri Besar does not fit this bill."

It is learnt that Dr Khir's supporters have gone on the ground to assess how much support he could get.

He is expected to be nominated by Tanjung Karang Gerakan Belia 4B, of which he is a member.

Candidates for all posts have to be nominated and seconded by a youth body, besides an endorsement from their own organisation.

A delegate said MYC was sometimes regarded as a good training ground in producing future leaders. He cited former presidents Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali and Datuk Mohd Ali Rustam who are now Perak Menteri Besar and Malacca Chief Minister respectively.

"That's why Dr Khir's intention seems odd as he is already a Menteri Besar. But if he succeeds, he will be the first serving Menteri Besar to lead the council."

Meanwhile, in an interview, Saifuddin said ties between MYC and the Government could not have been better, something he hoped his successor would further consolidate.

The relationship reached new heights since 1999 with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad making it a point to attend the annual launching of the National Youth Day.

Council representatives have also been invited to sit on the National Economic Consultative Council and participated in budget dialogues.

Saifuddin said MYC had also changed its approach in tackling national and international issues.

"Before, we used to send memorandums demanding the Government does this and that. Memorandums are still submitted now but with proposals and measures."