

Umno Youth hands PKR invite to debate
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Umno Youth members today delivered an invitation letter to PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim, challenging him to debate Pakatan Rakyat's 100-day reform plan with their chief Khairy Jamaluddin.

Youth information head Reezal Merican (left) and secretary Megat Firdouz Megat Junid arrived at PKR's headquarters at 10.35am, along with another youth member, to hand over the invitation.

They emerged from the PKR office five minutes later, informing reporters that Anwar's chief-of-staff Ibrahim had accepted their letter.

Megat Firdouz said he hoped that Anwar could respond to Khairy's challenge to debate as soon as possible.

The invite repeats Khairy's verbal offer yesterday to debate in the place of the Prime Minister Najib Razak, whom Anwar had first challenged to a national debate.

"We have told PKR that Khairy as the Umno and BN youth chief is willing to debate with Anwar on the topic at any time (and) Mr Ibrahim said he will pass the letter to Anwar," he said.

"We hope Anwar can accept (the invitation) in the name of democracy."

He said that they have not set a deadline for Anwar's response, but hoped the latter can reply as soon as possible.

Once Anwar agrees, they will discuss the date, time and venue of the debate, said Reezal Merican.

"The most important is the people, the people want to hear from us, so we should open wider democracy space for them to access. Anwar must have something in his mind that he wishes to present to the people," he said.

Meanwhile Megat Firdouz was pleased that PKR had received them with respect despite the short notice they had given to their visit.

Khairy's challenge a diversion

Later at a press conference, PKR youth publicity chief Lee Khai Loon said that Umno Youth was only "pretending" by delivering the invitation, suggesting that their real motive was to deflect attention away Najib.

Lee (right) said Khairy had on several past occasions repeatedly declined PKR Youth Chief Shamsul Iskandar's invitations to debate.

"We (PKR Youth) had in fact sent an invitation letter to Khairy's office by fax yesterday, to

(challenge him to debate with us) on Pakatan Rakyat's manifesto," he said.

He said the move today was Umno Youth's ploy to shift the focus away from Anwar's challenge directed to the PM.

PAS Youth has also said that they have to date received no response from Umno and BN components to their invitation to debate Pakatan's 100-day plan.

The national wing is planning a forum on Jan 18 at the KLSCAH in Kuala Lumpur at 9.30pm.

"Till now we have not received a positive response from Umno and BN. I hope Khairy Jamaluddin, who is so eager now, sincerely wants to debate and participates in the forum panel," said PAS Youth chief Nasruddin Tantawi (left) in a statement yesterday.

Anwar Ibrahim yesterday challenged the prime minister to a national debate to see who offers the better economic policies for Malaysia.

The de facto PKR leader yesterday said that it was only proper for Najib to take him up on his invitation, as the premier had publicly questioned and ridiculed Pakatan's policies and figures outlined in their ambitious 100-day economic transformation plan.

In response, Najib said he did not see any benefit to be derived from a debate.

Khairy, who had last week announced his intention to take a break from politics, instead offered himself as Anwar's opponent saying there was no need for the premier to "waste his time" debating with Anwar.

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