

KJ to battle Dr M loyalist's son, two others

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FOCUS In the 2008 Umno polls, Khairy Jamaluddin defeated two candidates to clinch the coveted Umno Youth post. One of them was Dr Mahathir Mohamad's son Mukhriz.

NONEThis left the former Umno president seething.

Now with Akhramsyah Muammar Ubaidah Sanusi (right in photo) announcing that he would battle for the Youth post in next month's party polls, it appears that the Mahathir factor is once again at work.

It is an open secret that Mahathir despises Khairy, the son-in-law of former premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who was accused of having his father-in-law wrapped around his finger.

And when Abdullah began to shelve the projects initiated by Mahathir, the latter's resentment towards Oxford-trained Khairy escalated.

Akhramsyah, who is the Youth chief in an Umno branch in Langkawi, is the son of former Umno secretary-general and ex-Kedah menteri besar Sanusi Junid, a known Mahathir loyalist.

sanusi junid 050608Hailing from the same homestate of Kedah as Mahathir, Sanusi (left) had taken the side of the former premier when Mahathir locked horns with Abdullah.

Strengthening the perception of the Mahathir factor being behind Akhramsyah's candidacy was the latter's presence at Mukhriz's announcement yesterday of his intention to contest for a vice-president post this time around.

In view of this, the forces in Umno who are still loyal to Mahathir are expected to throw their weight behind Akhramsyah during the contest.

Akhramsyah, on the other hand, had likened himself to an "underdog" in the contest and said that he was contesting because Umno Youth needed to champion the rights of Malays more forcefully.

Khairy is no pushover

However, an Umno Youth source close to the top leadership pointed out that Khairy was no pushover either.

In 2008, the source said he battled the odds and perception that he was the chief cause of BN's dismal performance to defeat Mahathir's son and another heavyweight, former Selangor MB Dr Mohd Khir Toyo.

NONE "He has proven himself as a fighter and is now a minister as well. So I don't think he would have any trouble retaining his post," he said on condition of anonymity.

On the same note, the Umno Youth source noted that there were those who felt that the Umno Youth of today was a far cry from what it was in the past.

"It has become more mellow and some interpret this as a sign of weakness.

"Furthermore, there are some quarters who view Khairy as being too liberal (when it comes to defending issues involving Malay rights)," he added.

Two more candidates are due to join Akhramsyah in the battle to unseat Khairy. They are Merbok Umno division Youth chief Karim Ali and Taman Chempaka (Selangor) branch Youth assistant secretary Syed Rosli Syed Harman Jamalullail.

Utusan Malaysia reported that Karim was competing in order to "restore confidence in the community, especially among the young people in the party".

Meanwhile, Sinar Harian reported that 37-year-old Syed Rosli said the time had come for grassroots leaders to helm the party.

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