

Who will become Umno Youth vice-chief?

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ANALYSIS The four-cornered fight for the post of Umno Youth vice-chief is shaping up to be a fierce battle, with each candidate expected to show true grit in contesting the coveted post.

NONEThe post is seen as a stepping stone up the ranks of Malaysia's most influential political party.

The incumbent Razali Ibrahim (left) is not defending the seat, as he is trying his luck to become a supreme council member.

Of the four candidates, three are very closely matched in terms of popularity, based on their records.

Jamawi Jaafar, Lokman Nor Adam and Mohamad Iruan Zulkefli were all elected as Youth exco members with nearly matching vote counts the last time around.

Jamawi received 471 votes to Lokman's 406 and Mohd Iruan's 387 in the 2008 election.

TNONEhe dark horse may be the fourth candidate, an untested Khairul Azwan. He may have a different advantage as incumbent Umno Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar is said to have been rooting for him, ever since he was promoted to Perak Youth leader in 2011.

Umno sources said Jamawi (left) appears to be the lead candidate as he is Tenom Umno Youth head, and his post as special officer to Rural and Regional Development Minister Mohd Shafie Apdal also augurs well for him.

Mohd Shafie is himself defending his post as one of three Umno vice-presidents.

Jamawi, 39, an agricultural science graduate from Universiti Putra Malaysia, is likely to reap grassroots support in Sabah, where a majority of the Youth members come from.

Lokman Adam, 40, is certainly Jamawi's closest challenger.

While Jamawi is the Youth exco in charge of cultural affairs, Lokman is the head of

its debating unit.

NONEUmno Youth sources said Lokman (right) has been campaigning hard by organising almost 800 programmes, such as debates, speeches and courses, across the country.

These have attracted the participation of almost 3,000 members, who certainly know Lokman by now.

Malaysiakini has learnt that the former Internal Security Act detainee and ex-PKR Youth leader's strategy has paid off, with some 170 Youth divisions having pledged their support for him.

But it won't be an easy fight, as both Jamawi and Lokman know that up to 75,000 votes are up for grabs.

Split in Perak votes?

Lenggong Youth head Mohamad Iruan, 36, has been a grassroots leader since 2001 and climbed the ranks to become chairperson of Umno Youth's social ethics bureau in 2008.

NONEIn the last election, he got fewer votes than Jamawi and Lokman, but made the list of the 20 chosen for exco membership.

However, Mohamad Iruan (right), a grassroots activist, has his feet firmly on the ground and is deemed a good representative in transmitting sentiments on the ground to the upper echelons of the party.

Khairul, 39, graduated from Cardiff University in Wales and embarked on his political career at the Umno Youth academy in 2008.

Three years later, he was chosen to head Perak Umno Youth and was appointed private secretary to Chief Minister Zambry Abd Kadir.

Khairul was vice-chairperson of Yayasan Bina Upaya and vice-president of the Perak Football Association, and has been actively involved in social work in Perak.

Perak has the third largest base of Umno members, after Sabah and Johor.

Perhaps the only advantage Jamawi and Lokman can count on is a split in votes between Mohd Iruan dan Khairul, since both hail from Perak.

Will that happen? Stay tuned for the answer on Oct 12.

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