

Making PKR a 'natural choice' for the youth

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INTERVIEW Aspiring PKR Youth leader Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad sees a problem. The PKR Youth wing should be "the natural choice" for all young Malaysians eager to get into politics, but it is not.

Rival Umno Youth, Nik Nazmi concedes, has done well since its popular head Khairy Jamaluddin Abu Bakar was also made youth and sports minister last year.

However, while he has a similar vision to whip PKR Youth into shape, Nik Nazmi is, for now, keeping mum on his aspirations.

It is possible that he would battle for the Youth leadership, now held by his "friend" Shamsul Iskandar Mohd Akin, Nik Azmi said when asked. But he would not confirm this yet because the PKR elections are only due in April.

"If I announce it, then I am confident of winning. I am an old hand who has been involved in party affairs since 2001... I don't feel that winning or losing is the big issue.

"But wait for my decision, when the time comes," the Selangor state assembly deputy speaker said in an interview with Malaysiakini.

Observers noted that the 32-year old Nik Nazmi is likely to face 34-year-old Amirudin Shari, the Batu Caves assemblyperson, for the post of PKR Youth chief.

Nik Nazmi, who is also assemblyperson for Seri Setia, then elaborated on his vision for the wing.

"Keadilan created a unique brand, as a party with many races and national representatives in every state, from Perlis to Sabah. We are the only party that has this achievement.

"And we often promote young leaders into the mainstream of our party," he said.

Strengths not fully exploited

But despite this, Nik Azmi said, the Youth wing has not fully exploited its strengths.

It needs to match the reach of Umno Youth, which is seen dealing with national issues at the top as well as sitting at the bottom, with the ordinary people, he said.

"We don't just want to be kampung heroes.

"We have to rebuild the PKR Youth with strength that comes from the youth... from where the ideas for change and reform come. We have to leverage our strengths as a progressive party," he added.

Nik Nazmi noted that Keadilan has the most members in Selangor and Sabah and its membership now comprises 50 percent Malays, 20 percent Indians and 15 percent Chinese, with the other ethnic groups making up the remainder.

"It should be the natural party for young Malaysians," he said.

"We should be an organisation that represents all the talents and celebrates all in the party - from activists to reformists to union leaders to professionals and corporate people, academicians and artistes."

On the contest for the Youth leadership, should there be one with Amirudin Shari (left), he said he hoped it would be healthy and not split the party into camps.

News reports have said that many see the tussle for the PKR Youth leadership as a contest between camps loyal to PKR vice-president Azmin Ali and Selangor Menteri Besar Abdul Khalid Ibrahim.

Although both worked under Khalid in the past, Amirudin is seen as pro-Azmin and Nik Nazmi as pro-Khalid.

However, Nik Nazmi laughed this away.

"It's funny because last year a media portal said I was in Azmin's camp but this year, another media said I am in Khalid's camp.

"For me, look at my Twitter, my writing and my record and make up your mind. It will be hard to box me in anywhere. For me, I just hope to play a role as the people's choice and PKR's choice."

