

Five in fray for PKR deputy presidency

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COMMENT No one, except for Mustapha Kamil Ayub of Perak, albeit privately, has so far expressed their candidacy for the deputy presidency of PKR. It's election time later this year.

It's believed that Azmin Ali of Selangor and former Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Zaid Ibrahim from Kelantan will soon declare their candidacies as well, now that Mustapha has "thrown his hat into the ring". Mustapha meanwhile says his candidacy will depend on the party divisions.

Zaid was supposed to have announced his candidacy before Mustapha, but it is learnt, he was urged by his supporters to err on the side of caution.

keadilan election 151204 mustapha kamil ayub Mustapha (left), who once headed PKR Sarawak, chose Kota Kinabalu to make the announcement a few weeks ago - and with good reason too: it is estimated that PKR has about 100,000 members in Sabah, compared with 50,000 in Sarawak.

If double memberships, always a problem in political parties, are weeded out, it's likely the real figures would be a little more than 60,000 and 20,000 respectively.

Mustapha may be setting his hopes too high in Sabah, if not in Sarawak. He was quickly replaced as PKR Sarawak head by Baru Bian after a rebellion in neighbouring Sabah led to the unceremonial removal of his good friend Azmin Ali by party division chiefs aligned to vice-president and Keningau division chief Jeffrey Kitingan.

Azmin began well in Sabah, with much goodwill, but incredibly took a mere two months to turn the tide in the state against him. The Sabahans quickly fathomed from his own inner circle in the state that he was gearing himself up for the deputy presidency.

azmin ali pc in parliament 020709 02 Both Sabah and Sarawak appear to be no go areas for Mustapha and Azmin (left).

Of the 26 divisions in Sabah and Labuan, it has been conservatively estimated that 21 are aligned with Jeffrey, who is likely to throw his support behind Zaid's bid for the deputy presidency. Jeffrey's supporters however want him to go for the deputy presidency as well.

Likewise, 20 of the 28 divisions in Sarawak are aligned with Jeffrey.

PKR Sarawak has 31 divisions, following the parliamentary constituencies, but the Registrar of Societies has yet to approve Igan, Limbang and Kapit.

Azmin, however, is not giving up that easily. He seems to have prevailed on the party's spiritual adviser and guiding light, Anwar Ibrahim, to lobby Jeffrey for his support in Sabah and Sarawak.

The incumbent, senator Syed Husin Ali, is expected to stay out of the fray if earlier indications from him, albeit feeble, are to be believed. A week, they say, is a long time in politics.

'Stay on for sake of unity'

Syed Husin's reportedly dwindling band of supporters, meanwhile, is quietly urging him to go for at least one more term, ostensibly "to help preserve party unity". It appears that they fear more about what's in store for them within the party in a post-Syed Husin era.

His apologists claim that their man is already into his 70s, although apparently still in reasonably good health. More importantly, they say, he lacks the personal financial means to move around as much as he

would like to, or as expected.

anti ppsmi english language for math and science ceramah 230209 syed hussein aliAnd Syed Husin (left) is not one known to beg the party for financial help or, allegedly like some of the others eyeing the deputy presidency, lobby for opportunities that will help oil his political machine.

In that case, it will be a contradiction in terms to urge him to stay on.

The betting among his supporters is that Anwar can be relied on to step in and save his old friend from their days as political prisoners at the infamous Kamunting Detention Centre in Perak. In short, it appears that Syed Husin, or at least his supporters, very much want to see him returned opposed to the deputy presidency.

Perhaps, he sees it as an affront of sorts to his dignity to be publicly challenged, although he isn't openly saying so.

There's little doubt about Anwar's incredible strength within the PKR rank-and-file. Anwar's problem is that the party would expect him to remain above the fray, no matter who the candidates are for the deputy presidency. Incumbency is not seen as a carte blanc of sorts to outstay one's welcome.

Nominations close in mid-September and voting by all party members, an unprecedented first in Malaysia, will take place in mid-October. The official results will be announced in late November, at the party congress, along with that for elections to the central leadership council, including the president.

Incumbent president Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail is a virtual shoo-in for the top post, unless she declines in favour of Syed Husin, which is very unlikely, or perhaps for her husband.

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