

**PKR Youth: Old faces appear more favourable**  
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Novice Mohd Rafizi Ramli certainly takes the competition for the leadership of Parti Keadilan Rakyat's Youth wing to a new level, but nothing can possibly match the legacy of incumbent Youth chief Shamsul Iskandar Md Akin and fellow youth leader and blogger, Badrul Hisham Shaharin.

A likely tussle for leadership of the party's Youth wing among these three will be more than a battle of the brains, party insiders believe. Past experience and grassroots support would be the criteria to ensure support and continuity.

Though new to the ring, Mohd Rafizi is a known face among the NONEparty's professional circles and his candidacy has won the endorsement of elected representatives as well as party de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim's inner circle.

Pledging to cleanse the wing of its "idolism" and "cultist" approaches by reaching out to the 4.6 million young voters in the country as well, Rafizi (left) is confident that his team, dubbed Generasi Reformasi, has the blueprint for what's needed to entice them.

He boasts that his fan page on social networking website Facebook received more than 500 fans just a day after he announced his intention to contest.

"I take comfort that the message we are trying to send has some resonance... I am aware that people find it a little difficult to understand my motive, but I am confident the message we are sending out is that we will take on the right issues," he said.

On hindsight, PKR would lose out to other parties if issues of unemployment, affordable housing, quality income and Internet freedom were not addressed, he said.

Rafizi's team described as 'elitist'

Nevertheless, members might be a little wary in trusting him because Rafizi relinquished his position as a supreme council member as well as Youth executive council member in 2004, after a fallout with the wing's decision to include women in its ranks.

"Rafizi's team appears to be elitist. They portray themselves as professionals and foreign-educated state assemblypersons. They are also seen as close to Anwar, as they either have or are working in Anwar's offices as economic adviser (to the Selangor government) or as party leader," said the wing's information chief Lee Khai Loon.

"(But) Rafizi left in 2004, when times were very hard for PKR," Lee recalled.

In that year, PKR had suffered a disastrous blow in the general election, with only one elected representative in Parliament. However, this multiplied to more than 30 in the 2008 general election.

"I feel it would have been better if Rafizi contested for the deputy youth post, as he doesn't have much experience. Amirudin (Shari) is still young and has a lot of commitment as (Batu Caves) assemblyperson, while Nik Nazmi (Nik Ahmad) is already the communications chief. Maybe they chose Rafizi because he has more time," said Lee.

Shamsul a committed leader

Incumbent Shamsul defeated PKR Parit Sulong division chief Hasmi Hashim in the 2007 battle.

amk pkr youth agm congress 280510 shamsul iskandarShamsul (right) inherited the wing from one of the the party's founders and its first Youth chief, Ezam Mohd Nor, who severed ties with PKR in 2008 and crossed over to rival Umno.

"I am still getting feedback from the grassroots and I need to listen to their issues," Shamsul said when asked if he had made up his mind whether he would battle to retain the post.

"They (the grassroots) want a leader who is committed and consistent... (the betrayal) of Ezam is still felt, so a new face is not really an alternative. After the party election is over, we have to be prepared for the 13th general election and there will be no time to consolidate," he asserted.

Though seeing red over his opponent's high profile line-up, Shamsul hoped members would bear in mind that PKR was made up of people from "all walks of life, and so a diverse leadership group is needed".

Lee has publicly declared that however difficult the challenges might get, Shamsul remained the man for the job.

Shooting down criticism that Shamsul had not generated fresh ideas for the wing, Lee said, "The team player leads through a collective effort (and) new ideas should not come just from one person."

But Shamsul himself does not discount the fact that he has been in party long enough to gamble his luck and experience for a vice-president's post.

Chegubard still without a team?

With him left undecided, the targets are trained on another supreme council member with a reputation, Badrul Hisham, who is more popularly known as Chegubard.

NONELike Shamsul, blogger Badrul Hisham has yet to declare his intention, and this, party people say, is because he is yet to come up with a team with strong credentials.

Word is that he is contemplating his chances, but efforts by Malaysiakini to get him to confirm his candidacy have been fruitless.

The odds are that skilled orator Badrul Hisham could well bag the youth leadership if he decides to contest, for his popularity spans throughout the peninsula as he participates in various social movements, making Rafizi's prolific line-up seem a consolation.

Lee has suggested to Shamsul that he hooks up with Badrul Hisham to form a power team to "beat the competition hands down".

He told Malaysiakini, "I know people are asking Shamsul and Chegubard to combine forces. Both are now trying to line up their teams.

"This is a good call because they complement each other. Shamsul is a lawyer and has good grassroots support. He is also very hard-working and goes out to give ceramah.

"Chegubard is also very hard-working, and has influence among different groups and in different areas, in the northern parts, in Kedah, Penang and Terengganu, as well as in Negeri Sembilan, while Shamsul is strongest in the central areas."

Lee feels Badrul Hisham should contest as Shamsul's deputy.

"Shamsul became youth chief in 2007 and can only hold the post for one more term, if he wins.

"The first three years were for him to do damage control and the second three years will be to push the agenda. I think it will be good for Chegubard to contest as his deputy, and take over after that."

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