

Knives are drawn for deputy PKR post
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ANALYSIS It is still weeks yet before nominations for the PKR deputy president's post close, but the knives have already been drawn out pkr national congress 301108 azmin ali are out.

So far, Zaid Ibrahim is the only one who has openly declared his intention to contest the post, but recent developments show that actions speak louder than words.

In what many feel is reminiscent to Umno-style politicking, vice-president Azmin Ali (right) has all but confirmed that he will challenge Zaid for the number two post.

Azmin appears to have understood that winning over the 400,000 PKR members requires an image revamp, and this he has tried to do, even with his lips firmly sealed.

Already courting a bad reputation after taking over as Selangor chief from Khalid Ibrahim, the PKR founding member is attempting to capitalise on the issue of loyalty.

Indeed, this appears to be the main theme of the two press conferences that saw PKR elected representatives openly joining Azmin's camp.

In almost identical press statements, the parliamentarian and state assemblypersons groups said that they are backing Azmin because he has persevered throughout the difficult Reformasi days.

Using the victim card

This is unlike Zaid who joined PKR in the "post-tsunami good times", and is said to be able to yet to prove that he has exorcised his traces of Umno blood.

But even this show of force may not be as strong as Azmin would have hoped it to be.

Cracks are showing, with some parliamentarians and state assemblypersons claiming to have been 'duped' into pledging their support for Azmin.

Such manoeuvring could also backfire, with voters likely to get the impression that Azmin's camp is undermining the democratic process by using elected representatives to throw their influence around.

NONE An experienced politician, Zaid (left) too seemed to have pre-empted his opponent's move and is using the same tactics to hit back.

Instead of meeting Azmin head-to-head, the former de-facto law minister seems to have chosen to fight it out as an underdog.

In fact, Zaid seems to be a couple of steps ahead of the younger politician, using the latter's tactics as pre-emptive strikes.

Although he did not drop names, Zaid's claim that a smear campaign is under way against him shows that he is not holding back punches.

Perhaps sniffing the public declaration of support against him, Zaid issued an emotive

statement saying that he is willing to share the fate of Umno's Ghafar Baba.

Ghafar had at one point lost support to Anwar Ibrahim in an Umno election for the deputy president's post, when Anwar's camp made known that they were backing the latter.

Capitalising on Azmin's bad reputation

Zaid also rather deftly capitalised on Azmin's chequered reputation by declaring that a smear campaign against him is under way.

Those campaigning for Zaid claim that this was inevitable, that making it public would stop the underhanded tactics.

All the same, the side benefits are apparent. No names were mentioned but there is no mistaking that Azmin has bore the brunt of this "expose".

Malaysiakini understands that 'preventive measures' have been put in place to stop these tactics from carrying on.

It is claimed that he will only name names and blow the whole thing out of the water if they continue.

But without substantiating proof, Zaid runs the risk of being accused of starting his own fire and of ungentlemanly conduct.

A slug, by-proxy or otherwise, may turn what should be a healthy competition to one that could cause severe fractures in the party.

NONEIf this is the case, incumbent Syed Husin Ali (right) would probably consider re-contesting to keep the party together.

He can do this and choose to retire midway through his term, leaving the leadership to appoint a temporary deputy until the next election, rendering all the politicking useless.

But with Syed Husin choosing to keep all at the edge of their seats, the duo will yet see whether their efforts will be wasted.

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