

**Why is Mustaffa Kamil going for PKR No 2?
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What gives in PKR vice-president Mustaffa Kamil Ayub's decision to accept nominations for the deputy president's post?

He could not even win the chairman's post in his division of Pasir Salak in Perak. So why does he think that he can vault to the party's No 2 position?



Everyone knows that Mustaffa (*left*) is a prominent member of the Abim group in PKR which left the party in 2002 after it lost its battle to stop the merger of Parti Rakyat Malaysia (PRM) with Parti Keadilan Nasional (PKN) - the resulting entity becoming Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR).

PRM, with his leanings in 'godless' socialism, were anathema to Abim (Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia) and despite a message from jail where he was consigned on trumped-up sodomy charges, the movement's founder, Anwar Ibrahim, could not sway his former compatriots to support PRM's merger with PKR.

It was left to Azmin Ali, current vice-president and now the leading contender for the deputy presidency, to carry the fight which he did faithfully and successfully.

It's not for nothing that several PKR stalwarts cite Azmin's fidelity to Anwar and the PKR cause for supporting his intended promotion to the party's No 2 position.

Lasting mistrust of Azmin

It was not only that battle for the PRM-PKN merger that earned Azmin the lasting mistrust of the Abim faction in PKR; there was also another incident that made them wary of him.

It occurred at PKR's elective congress in 2001 where Azmin was said to have reneged on a deal with Abim. The details of what it was all about are hazy, but the Abim faction in PKR emerged from that episode leery of Azmin, a feeling that was exacerbated by his successful campaign against the Abim-led opposition to PRM's merger with PKN the following year.

The Abim faction returned to the PKR fold when Anwar was released from jail in 2004, after serving six years on a dubious conviction for corruption and sodomy.



Ever the unifier, the released Anwar managed to convince people like Mustaffa and Mohd Nor Manuty, another ex-Abim stalwart, to rejoin PKR. They did.



In the 2007 elective congress, Mustafa was elected to one of the party's vice-presidential slots.

It is said that when Mustafa announced in advance of this year's election process that he intended to vie for deputy president, the Azmin forces, intent on derailing him, prevailed upon an unknown but popular member of the PKR Pasir Salak division to throw his hat into the ring for the chairmanship. The upshot: their proxy won and Mustafa lost.

But defeat for the division chairmanship has not given Mustapa pause. Why?

Anwar offered Zambry the MB-ship

In the second week of March 2008 when it was clear that the royal household of Perak would not accept a Chinese state assemblyperson from the DAP, the party with the highest number of seats in the legislature, as the menteri besar, PKR supremo Anwar offered the MB-ship to Zambry Abd Kadir, the elected Umno assemblyperson for Pangkor.

Zambry, the current Perak MB, was a staunch supporter of Anwar when the latter was deputy prime minister (1993-98). He was a target for repression in the days immediately after Anwar's sacking from government and Umno in September 1998.

But Zambry trimmed his sails to suit the prevailing winds and when Anwar offered him the MB-ship in the immediate aftermath of the March 2008 tsunami, he declined. He said he preferred to be the opposition leader of the ousted Umno-led BN coalition that had ruled Perak since independence in 1957.



It was then that Anwar left Mustafa with the impression that he could become MB of Perak on grounds of a little-known provision in the Perak constitution that a nominee who enjoyed the confidence of a majority of the legislature's members could become MB even if he were not an elected member.

A buoyed Mustafa went round saying he was the MB designate. He was met with derision by elected members who felt that someone who had failed to get endorsed from Kuala Kangsar for Parliament and from a Pasir Salak (where he was born) ward for the state legislature, could not be credible as MB.

No hope against leading contenders

The uncertainty was resolved when the Perak royalty rounded on Nizar Jamaluddin of PAS, a party that had six seats to PKR's eight and DAP's 17, as the acceptable choice for MB. In the event, Nizar turned out to be a popular MB, albeit a short-lived one.

Meanwhile, Mustafa continued to be hopeful that his day would come in Perak. Last April, his name was on a party list of 10 candidates for the Hulu Selangor by-election in Selangor.

Mustafa and Shamsul Iskandar Akin, the PKR youth leader who is from Malacca, whose

name was also on the list, were told by Anwar that they should not be too disappointed if they were not chosen for Hulu Selangor because they were MB and chief minister hopefuls for Perak and Malacca respectively, should a PKR-driven Pakatan win the two states in the next general election.

Mustaffa has no hope of overhauling both Azmin and Zaid Ibrahim, the leading contenders for deputy president in the current race, because the Abim influence in PKR has waned in the face of an Indian, Chinese, Kadazan and Dayak surge in membership of PKR.

But that won't daunt him because he expects that he would win a state seat in the next general election and there is speculation that the royal household is not likely to approve if a re-elected Nizar is submitted as Pakatan's choice for MB.

Mustaffa believes he would then factor in the reckoning for MB. His push for the deputy presidency of PKR is his way of keeping his MB hopes alive.

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