



PKR No 2: Khalid may enter race
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An essentially two-horse race for the post of deputy president of PKR now promises to be a more crowded affair, with Selangor Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim not ruling himself out of aiming for the post.

Sure, the already announced entry of incumbent vice-president Mustaffa Kamil Ayub to the race has converted the hitherto two-cornered fight between favourite Azmin Ali (*right*) and challenger Zaid Ibrahim into a three-way battle.

But nobody gives Mustaffa much of a chance of seriously troubling frontrunner Azmin and contender Zaid.

Mustaffa, a candidate from the Abim faction of PKR, may well be prevailed upon to drop out of the race if it is seen that he is likely to take votes away from Azmin, who the faction is none too fond of.

The reverse may well happen to Khalid - he being enticed to enter the race if only to split the votes that would otherwise go to Zaid.

Khalid and Zaid are not exactly admirers of Azmin. And Zaid has gone on record as saying that he would only contest the deputy president's post if Khalid is not interested to vie for it. Khalid's desire is to be a successful MB

Khalid is plausibly not keen on becoming anything else but a successful MB of Selangor, which he is, but for the perception that he has not done enough for party personnel who have suffered repression in the years 1998 to 2008, when Reformasi supporters were targeted by the powers that be having malign intent towards Anwar Ibrahim.



Khalid would like to see Azmin beaten by Zaid but powers stronger than he in PKR may well prevail on him to enter the race, if only to divert votes from Zaid (*left*) to ensure the latter's defeat.

Zaid has become a formidable contender not because of his innate strengths as a reformist but because Azmin is disliked by many PKR supporters and members who see him as a throwback to Umno. The latter is the pet aversion of all those desiring thoroughgoing reform of the Malaysian polity.

Though Zaid has said that he would sit it out if Khalid enters the race for deputy president, he has thrust himself into the arena too far to retract now. Retraction would see supporters who are committed to him left high and dry.

That is something a politician should not do: let down supporters who have sallied forth for him, even as he drops signs he is not fully committed to the course he has beckoned them to.

A decision by Khalid to contest would be governed by considerations of realpolitik rather

than anything else: with Azmin breathing down his neck in Selangor, he would like to be allowed some slack.



Like Mustaffa Kamil (*left*), who is not so much interested in becoming PKR No 2 as wanting to keep alive his hopes of becoming the MB of Perak after the next general election, Khalid Ibrahim may use the chance of contesting for the post as a bargaining chip in his battle to run Selangor the way he would like to, without Azmin's malevolent intrusions.

A quarter of PKR's 400,000 members, who are empowered to vote directly for their leaders in the party elections - a unique feature in Malaysian politics - are said to be from Selangor.

MB Khalid's entry into the deputy president's race is bound to be at the expense of Zaid, and prove the point that "the enemy of my enemy is not exactly my friend".

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