



PKR No 2: Azmin shocked that Khalid is in race
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PKR deputy president hopeful Azmin Ali was very much taken aback when Selangor Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim revealed his interest in the same position on Sunday.

"I am shocked by Khalid's announcement. Based on feedback from friends and leaders including his senior staff, he had given his commitment not to contest (as his) focus is on running the state."

Azmin (*left*) was speaking tonight after returning from a trip to Jakarta with the de facto party leader, Anwar Ibrahim.

"It is not my preference but it was what was decided by the party at (the retreat in Shah Alam)," he continued.

He added that the "spirit of the decision" made in Shah Alam last June, was for Azmin to concentrate on the party while Khalid kept his eyes on state development.

Azmin's appointment as Selangor PKR chief, replacing Khalid, was considered the height of the apparent rift between the two.

The MB was prior to that under intense criticism from party members, including Azmin, at the earlier Kota Bharu congress where he was accused of not assisting the party.

On Sunday, Khalid announced that he is keen to contest for party number two position to "balance the fight" which had turned "dirty" even during the nominations period.

While he did not mention names, fingers were pointed at both Azmin and fellow contender Zaid Ibrahim who had been publicly trading barbs.

Someone may drop out

The Gombak MP whose arrival at KLIA was greeted by about thirty supporters, also dropped hints of the possibility of drop outs among the four candidates, which including vice president Mustafa Kamil Ayub.

"We will have to wait. There is still a lot of time to decide, in politics even two days is a very long time," he said.

At the same time, Azmin appeared to not take Khalid's announcement too seriously pointing out that the latter has an exit clause in the form of the four-person advisory committee.



The older politician has asked for the advice of Selangor deputy chairperson Syed Shahrir Mohamud, Batu MP Tian Chua, Tenaganita head Irene Fernandez (*left*) and party religious understanding bureau chief Muhammad Nor Manuty on whether on not to contest for the number two post.



"From my understanding from (Khalid's) press release, his decision is not final," said the parliamentarian who had arrived conspicuously without Anwar.

The de-facto leader was on board the same flight but is believed to have exited separately to escape media attention.

No secret meetings

Whether all four deputy president hopefuls will race to the finish remains a question mark until Oct 16, when nominations must be officially accepted.

The Jakarta trip was rumoured to be part of a series of negotiations to reduce the number of candidates for the number two post.

Azmin however refuted this, saying that the main objective was to reinforce ties with Indonesian leaders following recently strained diplomatic relations.

Despite his insistence that he is in the race to win it, Mustaffa (*right*) is believed to be a likely candidate to step out.

Zaid too is said to be eyeing the top spot, having said that he will back out of the race if Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar takes up the challenge.

Nurul Izzah has, however, failed to qualify to contest as she had only garnered one nomination by the deadline of Oct 10.

This is disputed by some who claim that at least two of the 35 divisions who missed the deadline to send in their nominations had proposed her for deputy president.

When contacted for comment, Zaid simply said, "I will issue a statement on Friday."

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