



**Azmin shocked that Khalid wants in
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PKR deputy president hopeful Azmin Ali expressed "shock" over Selangor Menteri Besar Khalid Ibrahim's announcement that he too is interested in the position.

"Based on feedback from friends and leaders including his senior staff, he had given commitment not to contest (as his) focus is on running the state.

"This (the decision to focus on the Selangor government) is not my preference, but what was decided by the party at (the retreat in Shah Alam)," he said.

Azmin added that the "spirit of the decision" made in Shah Alam last June was for him to concentrate on the party while Khalid would keep his eyes on the administration of the state.

The party subsequently appointed Azmin as Selangor PKR chief to replace Khalid in the bid to heal the apparent rift between the two leaders.

Prior to that, the Selangor MB came under intense criticism from party members, including Azmin, at the earlier Kota Bharu party congress that Khalid was not doing enough to assist the party.

On Sunday, Khalid announced that he was keen to contest for party number two to "balance the fight" which had turned "dirty" even during the nomination period over the past month.

While he did not mention names, fingers were pointed to Azmin and fellow contender Zaid Ibrahim, both of whom have been publicly trading barbs.

Some candidates may drop out

The Gombak MP, whose arrival at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport from Jakarta was greeted by about 30 supporters late last night, also dropped hints of the possibility of withdrawal from among the four deputy president candidates, which included vice-president Mustaffa 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 pointed out that the Selangor MB may have an exit plan in the form of a four-person advisory committee.

The older politician has asked for the advice of Selangor deputy chairperson Syed Shahrir Mohamad, Batu MP Tian Chua, Tenaganita head Irene Fernandez and party religious understanding bureau chief Muhammad Nor Manuty on whether to contest for number two.

"From my understanding from (Khalid's) press release, his decision is not final," said the parliamentarian, who had emerged from the airport conspicuously without PKR *de facto* leader Anwar Ibrahim.



The party supremo was on board the same flight but is believed to have exited separately to avoid the media.

The Jakarta trip, which included a number of top PKR leaders, 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 of the visit was to reinforce ties with Indonesian leaders following the strained diplomatic relations.

Zaid to issue statement on Friday

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

Despite his insistence that he is still very much in the race, Mustaffa is believed to be the most likely candidate to bow out.

Zaid (*right*), who is said to be also eyeing party's No 1 spot, said he would back out of the race if Lembah Pantai MP Nurul Izzah Anwar similarly follow suit.

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

This is disputed by some who claim that at least two of the 35 divisions which missed the deadline in submitting their nominations had proposed her for the deputy president's post.

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

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