

**Anwar : no post offered to entice Arif Shah**  
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**S Pathmawathy**

Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim today said he had not offered Penang Umno strongman and Seberang Jaya state assemblyperson Arif Shah Omar Shah to be the state's deputy chief minister 1 to replace the present PKR candidate.

"We have extended an invitation to him to join our party but nothing related to the deputy chief minister's post was discussed and there is no change to the leadership of Penang," Anwar told a press conference held at Parliament lobby today.

parliament anwar pc on motion rejected 241108Anwar dismissed talks of such an offer as a rumour, adding that he had also spoken to Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng about the matter.

The deputy CM 1 post is presently held by PKR's Penanti state assemblyperson Mohammad Fairus Khairuddin, who is said to be underperforming in his role.

Arif Shah was Anwar's opponent at the Permatang Pauh by-election last August which was won easily by the opposition stalwart.

Though they are presently at opposite camps, Arif Shah was at one time the Youth leader when Anwar was heading the Permatang Pauh Umno division.

Arif Shah is also presently facing problems in the Permatang Pauh Umno division which he claims is trying to sideline him.

He also had an open tiff with the division chief Abdul Jalil Abdul Majid, after which he had said that he was considering an offer from PKR to join the party.

**Fairus has been reprimanded**

At the press conference this morning, Anwar said that he had not met Arif Shah personally to invite him to join PKR.

He stressed that a representative was sent to speak to him.

"We respect his decision, and being fair to him, he had not demanded to such a thing (deputy CM post) either.

"He (Arif Shah) did not press for the Penang deputy chief minister post and we didn't discuss it.

"We are ready to accept him as a politician and as a state assemblyperson for Seberang Jaya under the basis of our struggle... we will help him to improve his service at his district," Anwar said.

Meanwhile, on allegations of Fairus' poor performance as the deputy chief minister, Anwar said the 33-year-old politician has been reprimanded accordingly and the necessary evaluation has been done.

"However, the evaluation was not just for him but for all state assembly representatives and PKR members of parliament," he said.

When contacted by Malaysiakini, Abdul Jalil denied having differences with Arif Shah.

He however ticked off Arif Shah of blowing up petty issues to invoke party sympathy.

"If he wants to jump, just jump. Don't make me a scapegoat. Don't blame others for your misery," said the Umno division chief.

In the recent hotly-contested Permatang Pauh Umno division leadership battle, Seri Kalui branch leader Arif Shah garnered 84 votes to finish a distant third behind Abdul Jalil (162 votes) and former National Mosque imam and 2008 parliamentary candidate Pirdaus Ismail (144 votes).

### **Mukhriz's suggestion is extreme**

Meanwhile, Anwar also commented on Jerlun MP Mukhriz Mahathir's controversial call to abolish vernacular schools to foster unity.

According to the opposition leader, such a call was made to garner votes in the upcoming Umno elections, where Mukhriz is contesting for Youth chief post.

"What he fails to realise is that looking at the constitutional provisions and the Education Act, there were certain guarantees that were given.

"I do not (deny) the fact that we need to evolve and respect other views but I don't think one should take up such extreme position," said Anwar.

To call for abolishing the vernacular school systems sounded like "returning to age of extremes", he said.

"There is a constitutional guarantee and an Education Act... respect the rights of parents and children to go to the schools of their choice... who are we to say to abolish (this).

"It is a dangerous view as it can hurt feelings... I don't have a problem with expressing one's view but this is something that is very extreme," he added.