

Khairy says up to bosses to decide on Rembau
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By Shannon Teoh

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 21 — Khairy Jamaluddin has backtracked on his intention not to defend his Rembau seat and quit politics after a general election expected within the year, repeating that it is up to "my superiors in the party."

The first-term Rembau MP said in Kota Bharu last night that the decision on the candidate was the prerogative of Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and he had the final say on the candidates who could give a win for Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN).

The Umno Youth chief (picture), who in early January said that he wanted to take a break from politics, told The Malaysian Insider that "I have already made my preference known... clear, very clear."

"But at the end of the day it is a team sport, we have to see what happens," he said in an interview.

When the federal lawmaker was quizzed on whether he would stand down as Rembau MP, he said that "I promised my superiors in the party that I would not say anything more on the subject so I leave it to them to decide."

In a function in Kota Bharu last night, Khairy said that what was crucial was to ensure victory for the party.

"If there are members or leaders who are not selected as election candidates and want to sabotage other candidates, the movement will report to the leadership.

"Now is no longer a question of whether the person is popular in the party or he/she is highly educated. What is important is whether the people accept him/her to ensure BN wins," he added.

In the two years since capturing the prized Umno Youth leadership, Khairy has seen Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, who he defeated for the post and his deputy Datuk Razali Ibrahim appointed as deputy ministers by Najib.

Khairy's planned retreat from mainstream politics had come despite his best efforts to defend the Najib administration in political forums both physical and virtual, taking on Pakatan Rakyat (PR) politicians and supporters on both political and policy matters.

He remains Umno's most visibly centrist leader and credible purveyor of the prime minister's 1 Malaysia slogan of inclusivity.

But it had appeared to isolate him further from a party that has been showing its hawkish tendencies and a Youth wing that traditionally leans even further right.

However, Najib has recently praised Barisan Nasional (BN) Youth, which Khairy also chairs, for its efforts in pursuing programmes such as home ownership and career fairs aimed at easing the burden of this year's surging inflation.

Khairy rose meteorically during Abdullah's administration, becoming the vice chief for Umno

Youth and gaining infamy as part of the "Fourth Floor Boys" who were said to have the ear of the then prime minister.

He also refused to comment on rumours that Negri Sembilan Mentri Besar Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan was slated to take over as Rembau MP to allow him to take up a Cabinet post.

"They started because he is from Rembau. I'm not going to comment on what happens in my state, or plans for my state. I'm very supportive of his leadership. As far as candidates are concerned, I leave it to my superiors," he said.

He also denied speculation that he wanted a move in the opposite direction and take a state seat to allow him to become mentri besar.

"I have no aspirations in any direction," he said.

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