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Abang Abu Bakar's rivals going for broke

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KUCHING, Tues. - Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu's vice-presidents Datuk Abang Johari Tun Abang Openg and Datuk Adenan Satem, who are among three party stalwarts being groomed as the possible successor to party president Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud, are going for broke in the party's triennial delegates conference which begins tomorrow.

Abang Johari, the Industrial Development Minister and Adenan, the Agriculture and Food Industries Minister, are challenging Datuk Abang Abu Bakar Mustapha for the deputy presidency.

Abang Abu Bakar, the Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, has held the post since 1986.

Abang Johari and Adenan had also been nominated to contest the vice-president's posts but party election committee chairman Wan Wahab Wan Sanusi announced their withdrawal from this contest at PBB headquarters today.

The incumbent deputy president representing the Dayak community, Tan Sri Alfred Jabu anak Numpang, has been returned unopposed.

Another party leader being groomed as Taib's possible successor, Datuk Effendi Norwawi - the party treasurer - will contest for a vice-president's post.

"All the withdrawals were made through official letters signed by the candidates themselves.

"Among the reasons stated by them (for withdrawing) are personal commitments. They also said it was done voluntarily without any pressure," said Wan Wahab, who is also Sadong Jaya State Assemblyman.

Taib, who is Sarawak Chief Minister, was also returned unopposed. He will open the meeting of the youth and wanita wings tomorrow, while Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will open the delegates conference on Thursday.

Datuk Abdul Wabab Dolah and Bolhassan Di (Bumiputera wing), and Michael Lisa Kaya (Pesaka wing) have also withdrawn from contesting for the vice-president's posts.

The PBB, the backbone of the Sarawak Barisan Nasional, has nine vice-president's posts - four for the Bumiputera wing, three for the Pesaka wing, and the Youth and Wanita chiefs.

Kaya's withdrawal means that Datuk Celestine Ujang anak Jilan, Micheal Manyin anak Jawong and Datuk Stephen Wan Ullok have been returned unopposed as vice-presidents. Celestine who declined nomination to re-contest for the Youth leadership will be succeeded by Assistant Minister for Rural and Land Development Gramong Juna in the Youth wing.

In the Bumiputera wing, the vice-presidential hopefuls are Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud, Abdul Wahab Aziz, Awang Tengah Ali Hassan, Effendi Norwawi, Dr Abdul Drauf Zen and Datuk Dr Leo Micheal Toyad.

Seventeen candidates will be vying for the 11 supreme council seats, following the withdrawal of Awang Tengah Ali Hassan and Abdul Wahab Aziz.

Assistant Minister in the Chief Minister's Office Datuk Sharifah Mordiah Tuanku Fauzi was returned unopposed as Wanita head.

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