

All Sabah Umno divisions to nominate Mahathir

By RUBEN SARIO

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KOTA KINABALU: All 20 Sabah Umno divisions are expected to nominate Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the party's presidency, state information chief Datuk Karim Ghani said yesterday.

He said many Sabah Umno members hoped that party leaders would discuss how to avoid a bitter contest for the deputy president's post which is now vacant.

Three of the party's supreme

council members from the state including Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Mohd Shafie Apdal and former chief minister Datuk Salleh Tun Said are likely to defend their seats.

Chief Minister Datuk Osu Sukam has also indicated that he would prefer to defend his supreme council seat rather than go for one of the three vice-president's posts.

But the anticipation is that some Sabah Umno divisions will go ahead and nominate him for a vice-president's post as well.

"The divisions are entitled to nominate him and it is his right whether to accept or not," Karim said.

He said the prevailing feeling among many party members in the state was that Osu was the right candidate for a vice-president's post.

Other Sabah Umno leaders said to be keen to vie for the 25 supreme council seats are new Deputy Primary Industries Minister Datuk Anifah Aman and Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Lajim Ukin.

In the last party elections, Shafie, Osu and Salleh were among the six Sabahans who contested for supreme council seats.

Shafie secured the highest number of votes followed by Osu and Salleh while the three others — Datuk Dayang Mahani Tun Pengiran Ahmad Raffae, Datuk Railey Jeffrey and Edward Sin-sua — lost.

In the coming party general assembly, Sabah Umno will have 223 delegates, the second largest number after Perak which will have 250.

Karim said Sabah Umno was waiting for directives from the supreme council on the dates to hold its branch and division meetings.

He said each of the divisions would elect seven of their 12 delegates to the general assembly and nominate candidates for the respective Umno posts.

The Umno supreme council is scheduled to meet today to fix the date for the general assembly. The assembly is likely to be held in March or early April.