

09/04/2000

Crucial moments as last seven divisions meet today

Shamsul Akmar; Azran Aziz

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - As the Umno divisional meetings draw to a close, aspiring candidates who need a few more nominations to qualify will have their fate determined by the last seven divisions scheduled to meet tomorrow.

With the posts of president and deputy president uncontested, nominations from these seven divisions could help some candidates scrape through to qualify to contest the posts of vice-presidents and supreme council members.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi have unofficially secured the posts of president and deputy president respectively uncontested.

Nominations from the divisions to meet tomorrow - Bentong, Jerantut, Temerloh, Pekan, Raub and Mentakab in Pahang, and Bandar Tun Razak here - could be crucial for at least one vice-president hopeful and numerous aspirants to the supreme council.

Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah is the only one with a mathematical chance of joining nine others who have qualified for the race for the three vice-president posts.

He managed to secure one nomination from the Maran division, one of the two divisions which met today. The other division which met was Rompin.

Tengku Razaleigh has 14 nominations, three short to qualify to contest the vice-president's post.

Maran and Rompin both nominated Dr Mahathir and Abdullah for the posts of president and deputy president respectively.

For vice-presidents, Maran nominated both incumbents Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak and Tan Sri Muhammad Muhd Taib, and Tengku Razaleigh.

Rompin picked Najib, but opted for Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman and Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar for the other two slots.

Except for Tengku Razaleigh, the other four have already qualified.

Others who have qualified for the vice-presidential race are Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Seri Osu Sukam, Negri Sembilan Mentri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Rais Yatim and Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

After the seven divisions meet tomorrow, all 165 Umno divisions will have participated in the process of nominating candidates for the top posts.

On March 2, Tawau in Sabah became the first Umno division to hold its meeting. Until today, a total of 158 divisions have met but only 157 made their nominations.

Delegates to the Gua Musang meeting two weeks ago chose to leave the nominations to the divisional committee and it has not announced its choice.

Meanwhile, Temerloh Wanita Umno, which met today, nominated incumbent Wanita Umno chief Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman and incumbent deputy Datuk Napsiah Omar to defend the posts.

While Zaharah has long qualified, the nomination from Temerloh delivered Napsiah the much-needed 25th nomination.

International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz, who has 91 nominations, has also announced her decision to contest the Wanita

chief post.

In the Youth wing, acting chief Datuk Hishamuddin Tun Hussein and Pahang Umno Youth chief Mohamad Mustapha Khalid received three more nominations for the posts of chief and deputy respectively.