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Dr M, Abdullah on course (HL)

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Nominations for Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Umno president and deputy president respectively remain solid as all 15 divisions which met today named them for the two posts.

Kelantan Umno chief Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah obtained his first nomination for the vice-presidency from the Grik Umno division, headed by Perak party chairman and Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali. The nomination for Tengku Razaleigh in Grik came after Tajol Rosli, together with Menteris Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim (Perlis) and Datuk Syed Razak Syed Zain (Kedah), had agreed on Friday to ask divisions in their States to nominate him for vice-president.

They said the proposal was the best compromise, aimed at uniting Umno as well as giving Tengku Razaleigh the opportunity to hold a high party post. But much as Tajol Rosli managed to deliver Grik's nomination for vice-president to Tengku Razaleigh, Batu Gajah, another division in Perak which held its meeting today, did not do so.

Batu Gajah nominated Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman and Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad.

Prior to this, there was widespread speculation that some divisions may nominate Tengku Razaleigh for deputy president which would in effect go against the supreme council's advice of no contest for the top two party posts.

However, today, when the 15 divisions held their meetings, all heeded the advice and nominated Dr Mahathir and Abdullah for president and deputy president respectively.

The first meeting in Tawau on Thursday had also nominated Dr Mahathir and Abdullah for the two posts.

To be eligible to contest the president's post, a candidate must secure 30 per cent or 50 nominations from the 165 divisions.

For the deputy presidency, 20 per cent or 33 nominations must be secured for eligibility to contest.

So far, 16 divisions out of 165 have held their meetings and the rest are expected to convene theirs, in stages, by April 2.

Incumbent Najib remains the leading contender for vice-president with 15 nominations, while Ghani follows with a creditable 12 while Osu is third with seven nominations. Candidates vying for vice-president are required to secure 10 per cent or 17 nominations to be eligible.

On the Wanita Umno front, Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz continued to receive the bulk of nominations for the Wanita chief's post over incumbent Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman. Thus far, Rafidah has secured 15 nominations while Zaharah only has eight.

For the deputy Wanita chief's post, Datuk Shahrizat Abdul Jalil continues her fine run, securing 15 nominations against her closest rival, Aion Khariyah, who has five.

The other candidate nominated for deputy Wanita chief is incumbent Datuk Napsiah Omar who has only received three nominations.

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