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Nomination poser for Kubang Pasu delegates come March 30

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FOR the first time in almost two decades, delegates attending the Kubang Pasu Umno meeting will nominate candidates for top party posts in Umno. The meeting scheduled for March 30 at Dewan Jitra in Jitra will be watched closely not only by Umno members, but also others from all over the country.

Whether Kubang Pasu division leaders and members like it or not, those whom they will propose will likely be said to have the "blessings" of party president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

It was to avoid this possible misconception that the division had - since Dr Mahathir, the Kubang Pasu division chief, became the Prime Minister in 1982 - abstained from nominating anyone for the posts of the president, deputy president and the three vice-president positions.

This time around, however, the division has been given no choice but to name candidates to contest in the party's May 11 elections.

The supreme council's decision that all divisions must nominate candidates for these posts, in addition to the 25 elected supreme council seats, has changed the trend, certainly making the Kubang Pasu divisional meeting one of the most interesting to watch.

In the past the Kubang Pasu division, at most, had nominated candidates only for the supreme council seats.

"We know for a fact that in Umno, most decisions taken by the party are often linked to the president's perspectives, and since he is head of Kubang Pasu division, it is only expected that the division's choice of candidate for any post will be said to be those endorsed by Dr Mahathir," said a political observer.

Based on the trend of nominations so far by 80 Umno divisions - almost half of the 165 divisions in the country - the nominations for the posts of party president and deputy president will elicit little excitement.

"What is interesting will be who the division will nominate for the three elected posts of vice-president," said a committee member of another division in Kedah.

There are nine aspirants going for the party's third highest position, namely Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, Datuk Abdul Ghani Othman, Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar, Datuk Seri Osu Sukam, Tan Sri Mohamad Isa Abdul Samad, Datuk Seri Syed Hamid Albar, Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib, Datuk Dr Rais Yatim and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin. The first three have qualified.

"It will not come as a surprise on that day to hear a delegate throw in the name of Ku Li (Kelantan Umno chief Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah) for one of the posts open for contest." This, despite Tengku Razaleigh maintaining silence on the position he would want to contest.

His opinion was based on what transpired at the Kubang Pasu youth movement's delegates meeting where voting had to be carried out when more than one name was proposed for the Umno youth chief and deputy chief posts.

Although those who favoured acting youth chief Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein outnumbered those favouring Datuk Annuar Musa, there was a close fight for Datuk Abdul Aziz Sheikh Fadzir and Zein Isma Ismail for the number two post.

"Many had expected Abdul Aziz to be chosen by the delegates since he is the Padang Serai Umno youth committee member, but Zein was also nominated," he explained.

The division's Wanita movement's delegates meeting scheduled for March 24 at Sekolah Menengah Jitra is also expected to see a close fight between those "packaged" under former Wanita Umno chief Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz's "camp" and those backing incumbent Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman.

"The movement's committee members are divided as to who should lead the movement and voting will take place," said a Kubang Pasu division committee member.

The division's deputy chief, Tan Sri Osman Aroff, said despite this being something new to the delegates, there would be no problem on that day.

He said like the other divisions, delegates were free to nominate leaders of their choice to fill all posts open for contest.

"But of course they should bear in mind the no-contest advice for the top two posts by the supreme council."

That means that nobody other than Dr Mahathir and vice-president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi should be nominated for the top two posts respectively.

The division committee is scheduled to meet on March 28 to make preparations for the delegates' meeting at the end of the month. It will decide, among other things, how voting should be carried out if more than one name were to be proposed for the posts of president and deputy president.

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