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Perak leaders again form the bulk of supreme council members

PERAK has never produced an Umno president or deputy president, but a lot of the party's senior leaders have come from the State.

This was again the trend in Thursday's party elections, where delegates rallied to vote five of seven candidates from Perak for the supreme council seats, making it the State with the most number of representatives.

The five are Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Tajol Rosli Ghazali, former Youth chief Datuk Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mohamed Nazri Abdul Aziz, Deputy Education Minister Datuk Abdul Aziz Samsuddin and ex-Menteri Besar Tan Sri Ramli Ngah Talib.

The two who did not make it are Deputy Home Minister and former leader of the defunct Parti Melayu Semangat 46 Datuk Zainal Abidin Zin and ex-Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob.

The trend could be attributed to the strength of the State, which has the most number of Umno divisions at 23.

Perak also sent the most number of delegates to the assembly at 276, who constituted 13 per cent of the 2,081 delegates.

However, Perak delegates alone could not have made the difference, which goes to show that most delegates have confidence in leaders from the State.

Tajol Rosli secured 1,439 votes after Datuk Wira Mohd Ali Rustam (1,647) and Datuk Mustapa Mohamed (1,628). This is a clear endorsement that Tajol Rosli is a capable leader.

It also reflects Tajol Rosli's ability to unite Perak delegates under one objective - to elect as many Perak representatives to the supreme council as possible.

Given the situation Perak Umno had gone through during the two-year economic slowdown and the devastating Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim issue, which split the State Umno leadership, it was a surprise that delegates agreed to work as a team to promote its leaders.

The delegates' choice of Zahid, who secured 1,370 votes, and Nazri who received 1,354 votes, is also an indication that Umno wants to promote younger leaders.

Despite Zahid's image as an outcast following his association with Anwar and his "forced resignation" as Youth chief, his election shows that Umno is a forgiving party.

But, for a senior Umno member to suggest that Zahid be given a Cabinet post may be stretching it, at least during this particular political climate.

As for Abdul Aziz, who had served as Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's political secretary, his inclusion is not entirely unexpected.

The former Gopeng division chief was catapulted into the limelight following his appointment as a senator by Dr Mahathir and subsequently his appointment as Deputy Education Minister.

The victory could be an endorsement for his 15 years of service to the Prime Minister.

Perhaps the one Perak candidate who was not expected to win, but managed to scrape through was Ramli.

Speculation had been rife that in the run-up to the nominations for supreme council members, Ramli's name was not included in the four - Tajol

Rosli, Nazri, Zahid and Abdul Aziz - favoured to win the seats.  
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