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Azalina, Noraini to be endorsed at assembly

Ainon Mohd

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Puteri Umno pro-tem chief Azalina Othman Said and pro-tem secretary Noraini Ahmad will be officially endorsed as the movement's chief and deputy at its inaugural general assembly on Friday.

Umno executive secretary Datuk Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor said although they had won uncontested, their positions would only be official after the election process for the other posts.

The posts to be contested are chairman, deputy chairman and 20 members of the executive council.

Tengku Adnan said this at a Press conference when releasing the list of candidates qualified to contest the movement's elections.

Also present were members of the party's election committee headed by Tan Sri Kamarul Ariffin, Tan Sri Noordin Sopiee (deputy chairman), Tan Sri Elyas Omar, Tan Sri Zaki Azmi and Tan Sri Jen (R) Zain Hashim.

As there will not be any contest for the top post, the Puteri Umno inaugural assembly which initially promised to be exciting, is expected to be a tame affair.

The race for the movement's chief's post was over two weeks ago when Azalina swept all the 165 nominations when the divisions completed their meetings on Oct 16.

The other four contenders - former Puteri Umno information chief Mastina Abdul Hamid, Kulim/Bandar Baru Wanita division committee member Raihan Sulaiman, Seri Pandan branch chief Mazibah Md Zin and Hulu Klang Wanita member Umami Hafilda Ali - all failed to receive any nominations.

Noraini won uncontested when Pahang pro-tem chief Shahaniza Samsuddin, who received 18 nominations, and Penang pro-tem chief Azlina Mehtab Mohd Ishaq, who obtained 13 nominations, made known their intention not to take part in the race for the deputy's post.

Both wanted to uphold unity in the movement.

Tengku Adnan said of the 52 candidates, 47 were contesting the movement's executive council posts, three were standing for the permanent chairman's position and two for the deputy permanent chairman's post.

He said all the candidates nominated and eligible to contest the various posts in the elections had responded to the offer letter given out last week.

Tengku Adnan said the party headquarters had vetted all the candidates and found that they were eligible to contest.

"The vetting was done to ensure that only qualified candidates are allowed to participate in the assembly."

Tengku Adnan said initially four candidates were nominated for the permanent chairman's post but one decided to withdraw while for the deputy chairman's post, although five were nominated, only two were contesting.

As for the Exco seats, 47 candidates of the original 67 nominated have decided to contest.

Tengku Adnan said preparations for the assembly were progressing well.

He said Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would open the assembly.

He added that since there was no other agenda for the assembly, the election process would be conducted immediately after Dr Mahathir and Azalina delivered their speeches.

Tengku Adnan said the assembly would be attended by four representatives from each of the 165 divisions while three representatives from the Umno

supreme council would sit in the assembly as observers.

They are Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim, Deputy Defence Minister Datuk Mohd Shafie Apdal and Datuk Hassan Harun.

Meanwhile, Kamarul said the balloting procedure came under Section 6 (32) of the Umno constitution whereby a candidate could not delegate his voting rights to others.

"Your vote is a secret as provided under the party constitution. All delegates will be given three separate ballot papers," he said.

He said only committee members and those on duty would be allowed entry into the room where vote counting was being carried out.

Asked whether it was legitimate for Azalina to be endorsed as the movement's chief as the party's disciplinary committee was still investigating a report made against her, he said: "Such matters are not under the jurisdiction of the election committee."