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Four unchallenged (HL)

By Saiful Azhar Abdullah; Zubaidah Abu Bakar

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - It was a day when the expected happened in Umno.

The top two posts in Umno Youth and Wanita Umno were won uncontested and Gua Musang Member of Parliament Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah obtained his expected nomination, his first so far, to contest the party president's post, from the Gua Musang division he has led for decades.

Datuk Hishammuddin Hussein and exco member Khairy Jamaluddin will occupy the top two positions in the Youth wing, while Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz and Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil will continue to form the tandem in the women's wing.

The support for the Education Minister was unanimous, with all 183 youth divisions that have met so far giving him the mandate to lead them for another term. Khairy received support from 174 divisions and will be the Number Two.

The only other person to get more than one nomination for the deputy head's post was Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir with six, 23 short of the qualifying benchmark.

With only 11 more divisions not having met, Mukhriz, who had from the outset said he was not interested in the post, is out of the race.

For the Wanita movement, the expected challenge to Rafidah from her nemesis Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman turned out to be a non-contest.

The Minister of International Trade and Industry received 176 nominations, an ocean away from the six Siti Zaharah was able to muster.

Only six divisions are yet to meet.

Siti Zaharah wrested the post from Rafidah in 1996 by 27 votes but only managed to hold it for one term. Rafidah defeated her in 2000 by a 12-vote majority.

Rafidah said today: "I am thankful to all Wanita divisions who nominated me, including those who did not vote for me the last time.

"I hope this will strengthen the party. We have now all come under one banner and are more united than before.

"I had been hoping for this to happen and I thank God for it."

There was only going to be one winner for the deputy Wanita chief's position - that was evident from when the divisions started meeting on July 7.

Shahrizat said: "I thank all the divisions that have put their trust in me. God willing, I will definitely work harder not only to fight for women's issues but also for the Malay race and religion."

One person who is not likely to be contesting for any position in September is Tengku Razaleigh.

As expected, he received a nomination from his division.

He told delegates he would not be frustrated if he did not get the 58 nominations needed to contest the post.

"It's all right if I am not nominated. Just nominate who you feel is qualified.

"I will not be disappointed if I don't get the nominations."

Tengku Razaleigh said he offered to contest the post because he wanted to create awareness among the members of their right to choose their leaders.

"It has been a long time since members had the chance to choose their leaders. During Dr Mahathir's tenure, there was only one contest in 22 years," he said.

In 1987, Tengku Razaleigh challenged Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, losing by 43 votes in a contest which saw the party split down the middle.

However, Razaleigh said the 1987 split was not his fault but was caused by "external factors". "I love Umno. By God, believe me," he said.

The 1987 election, he said, was a good moment in the history of Umno as the members were given the freedom to choose their leaders.

"We are not cows, that we cannot differentiate between good and bad. We joined Umno for the sake of our future. Right or wrong, people must respect our stand," he said.

Umno acting president Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has received 101 nominations.

It is unlikely that Razaleigh will receive any more nominations from the 89 remaining divisions, which will hold their meetings by July 22.

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