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Pak Lah is new Umno president (HL)

By Zubaidah Abu Bakar; Nik Imran Abdullah
KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi and Datuk Seri Najib Razak have won unopposed the top two posts in Umno.

Abdullah became the party's sixth president after receiving 165 nominations today.

Najib received 166 nominations. Fifteen more divisions have yet to conclude their meetings.

Abdullah needed 134 nominations to win unopposed; Najib, 153.

Former Finance Minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who had declared his intention to take on Abdullah last week, could not get more than the single nomination he received from his own Gua Musang division yesterday.

Under the minimum nomination rules, Razaleigh needed 58 nominations from the 191 divisions to qualify for contest. Najib was the only candidate nominated for the deputy presidency.

The results were not unexpected, following the overwhelming victory by the Abdullah-led Barisan Nasional in the March general election.

With today's results, the top two posts in Umno and its Youth and Wanita wings were all won unopposed. The only contest at that level is shaping up in the Puteri wing.

The only surprise came in Razaleigh's decision to go for the presidency.

Razaleigh rejoined Umno seven years ago after a 10-year hiatus heading the Opposition Semangat 46 party. A powerful Umno chieftain in the 1980s when Umno had under a million members, Razaleigh could not make inroads nor extend his appeal to the two million newer Umno members who have taken the party membership to more than three million today.

Razaleigh has complained that the minimum nomination rule makes a challenge for the top posts difficult. Before 1987, when he challenged then Umno president Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, candidates required only two nominations to contest any post.

Abdullah and Najib, who are already acting in the top two positions, will be officially endorsed as president and deputy president for a three-year term when the party's delegates meet at its annual general assembly in September.

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