

# UMNO RACE HOTS UP

Bahan asal dari Arkib  
Negara Malaysia

ANALYSIS — By  
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**THE UMNO battle for power went into higher gear this week with announcements from two vice-presidents — Tengku Razaleigh and Datuk Musa Hitam — on their candidacy.**

The elections will be held on June 26 at the Umno general assembly — and with just two months to go, the potential candidates have already stated that they would never challenge either Datuk Hussein Onn, the Umno president, or his deputy, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Both Tengku Razaleigh and

**THE BATU BERENDAM** Umno division in Malacca nominated Datuk Hussein Onn for the Umno presidency yesterday. It also nominated Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad as deputy president, and Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, Datuk Musa Hitam and Encik Abdul Ghaffar Baba for the three vice-presidencies. — Bernama.

Datuk Musa have been careful to state that their candidacy for the top would come about only if there is a vacancy either in the presidency or deputy presidency.

The real question behind the manoeuvring is: Will Datuk Hussein Onn stay on as party leader?

He has yet to announce whether he would seek re-election, and consequently continue as both Prime Minister and party leader.

The Prime Minister has had a heart problem for some time, resulting in heart surgery in London. The operation was successful and he has made a remarkable recovery, but doctors have advised him not to overstrain himself.

The state of the Umno power game will depend on whether Datuk Hussein stays on or steps

down. There are two possibilities:

DATUK HUSSEIN would seek re-election for the sake of unity, but would relinquish the Prime Ministership and his party post later in the year; or

DATUK HUSSEIN would announce before the Umno general assembly is held that he is giving up his posts. Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir will undoubtedly succeed him, but the party will have to decide who it wants as deputy president and consequently Deputy Prime Minister.

In either case, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir would be unchallenged.

The current betting is that Datuk Hussein will decide to seek re-election. The spotlight would thus be thrown on the race for the three vice-presidencies in the party.

At present, the three vice-pre-

sidents in the order of the number of votes polled in the 1978 party election are Tengku Razaleigh, Encik Ghafar Baba and Datuk Musa Hitam.

Tengku Razaleigh has thus been acknowledged as the de facto number three in the party, after Datuk Hussein and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir, by virtue of his standing at the party polls.

He is now moving to ensure that he comes out tops again.

His strongest challenger is Datuk Musa, who was elected vice-president in his first try in 1978. Although he came out third in the race, he polled only 64 votes fewer than Tengku Razaleigh and a mere seven votes fewer than Encik Ghafar.

Tengku Razaleigh and Datuk Musa have both said that as long as Datuk Hussein seeks re-election as party president and Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir contests again for the deputy presidency they (Tengku Razaleigh and Datuk Musa) would not challenge for the posts.

The two have also said that if

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## HOTTING UP

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Datuk Hussein decides not to continue, then they would not challenge Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir for the party presidency.

But both have also implied that if there is a vacancy for the deputy presidency, then they would both be in the race.

If Datuk Hussein stays on, then Tengku Razaleigh would have to defend his senior vice-president's post against Datuk Musa's challenge.

Although both the late

Tun Abdul Razak and Datuk Hussein by-passed the senior vice-president in picking their number two, observers said it would be more difficult for Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir to do so when he does eventually move up.

(Tun Razak picked Datuk Hussein as his deputy although Encik Ghafar Baba was then senior vice-president and Datuk Hussein was the third vice-

president. Datuk Hussein by-passed senior vice-president Encik Ghafar again in 1976 when he picked Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir.)

"Both Tengku Razaleigh and Datuk Musa are young and ambitious (Tengku Razaleigh is 46 and Datuk Musa is 48) and both know that a promotion for one would probably mean postponing for quite a while the other's chances of becoming Prime Minister."

Tengku Razaleigh has said this week that he would stand for only one post in the election and that if he is beaten, he would resign from the Cabinet.

In short, he is staking his entire political future on the outcome of the contest for the deputy presidency, should such a contest be necessary.

Datuk Musa is now un-

derstood to be weighing his chances before deciding whether he, too, goes for broke.

Umno sources indicate that Tengku Razaleigh has emerged as the front-runner in the event of a contest.

But they added that Datuk Musa believes he has a fair chance of creating an upset and he has been campaigning up and down the country.

They said that the possibility of a winner take-all contest has resulted in some surprising shifts by certain key leaders of the party, once believed to be in one camp but who have since switched to the other.

Home Minister Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie has also been tipped as a possible contestant for the deputy presidency.

Tan Sri Ghazali is 59,

the same age as Datuk Hussein, and is the oldest of the likely challengers. He is fully aware that this could be his last chance of moving up to the Deputy Premiership and eventually the Prime Ministership.

He has failed in his previous tries to be a vice-president but has consistently been returned as a party Supreme Council member. Umno sources put chances for the deputy presidency as being slim, although he is also expected to make a bid for the vice-presidency again.

The coming party election has thus created a very competitive atmosphere in Umno.

Whatever the results of the election, however, Umno members will close ranks behind the winners, as the party has always done, in the knowledge that as the senior partner in the ruling the Barisan Nasional coalition, a divided Umno would spell disaster.