

**Najib nominations rise despite allegations**  
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Nominations for Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak for the post of Umno president continued to nudge up despite the cloud of scandal hanging over him.

The 55-year-old received the thumbs-up from Tuaran division in Sabah, raising his tally of nomination to 29.

muhyiddin yassin and najib and umno "The rumours are all baseless," said a Najib supporter.

"He has already sworn his innocence inside a mosque. I am sure Umno members are with him, they won't abandon him."

Nevertheless, Najib is dogged by talk he was involved in a high-cost helicopter deal sanctioned during his time in the defence ministry. He is also fighting off allegations he had an affair with a murdered Mongolian national Altantuya Shaariibuu. He has denied this.

Tuaran delegates also nominated vice-president Muhyiddin Yassin for the deputy presidency, boosting his total to 24 nominations.

The line-up for the party's three vice-presidents stood unchanged at 11, with no new aspirants joining the already crowded pack.

Outgoing Youth chief Hishammuddin Hussein led with 25 nominations and is the only one to have surpassed the minimum of 20 needed to qualify for election next March.

Former Youth chief Ahmad Zahid Hamidi is next with 15, while Sabah Umno deputy head Mohd Shafie Apdal has bagged 14.

**Growing calls for Rafidah to step down**

In the much-watched Youth chief's post, the tally remained unchanged after Pasir Puteh division unexpectedly postponed its meeting yesterday.

khairy jamaluddin and mukhriz mahathir umno However, today, the Sekijang division in Johor will meet and all are watching if the vote will go to frontrunner Mukhriz Mahathir, who already has 40, or arch-rival Khairy Jamaluddin, who has 20.

Former Selangor menteri besar Dr Mohd Khir Toyo, who is also chasing the post, has 12, while Zahidi Zainul Abidin is last with one nomination.

In the Wanita chief's race, another leader has joined the escalating chorus for incumbent chief Rafidah Aziz to step down.

umno nomination 2009 update at 3 27pm on 15 october 2008 151008 Head of Kalabakan division in Sabah, Hamisa Samat, urged Rafidah to step down in March instead of June, so as to clear the way for an earlier transition of power to her deputy Shahrizat Abdul Jalil.

"What we have expressed so far is not rejection of Rafidah's credibility and leadership, but

we are looking at it from the point of view of what is best for the party going forward," Hamisa said.

Earlier this year, Rafidah had promised to pass the reins to Shahrizat next June. In return, Shahrizat had agreed not to challenge the top Wanita post.

But the supreme council late last month postponed the party's annual general assembly and election from December to March next year, leaving Shahrizat in a spot.

There is growing talk that Rafidah may renege on her promise as the postponement means she will only be able to hold on to the top post for three months.

Both leaders have so far achieved the minimum number of nominations to defend their respective posts of Wanita chief and deputy chief. Rafidah now has 52 nominations while Shahrizat has 12.

But Shahrizat has been attracting nominations for the No 1 post despite her pact with Rafidah. Party watchers are now waiting to see how many more No 1 nominations Shahrizat can collect and if she will accede to pressure from grassroots to take on Rafidah.

The 191 Umno divisions are meeting across the country from Oct 9 to Nov 9. This week, 41 divisions will hold delegates' conferences, with most of the meetings slated for Friday and Saturday.

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