

Umno top guns advance after hectic weekend
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Umno leaders aspiring for top party posts mostly made progress over the weekend, with many securing the minimum nominations needed to stand for election next March.

At the top of the pyramid is Deputy Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, who won nominations from all 65 divisions that have met so far.

umno nomination 2009 candidates update 11 45am 20 october 2008 201008Given that the only other contender, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, has yet to obtain a single nomination, Najib is widely expected to romp home unchallenged at next year's election.

International Trade and Industry Minister Muhyiddin Yassin, currently at the centre of a storm over his calls to shorten the campaigning period, too has qualified to make a bid for the Umno No 2 post.

The 61-year old was taken to task by outgoing Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for trying to hasten the party's annual general assembly cum election - which was delayed by three months to March to coincide with the premier's retirement.

"I would definitely want to explain to him about what I said and meant," Muhyiddin was reported as saying in the local press today.

Nevertheless, he has chalked a total of 44 nominations so far, versus closest rival Mohd Ali Rustam's 13 and Muhd Muhd Taib's eight.

Eye-catching Rahim Thamby Chik

In the 12-way tussle for vice presidential nominations, four candidates have surpassed the minimum requirement.

Leading the pack is outgoing Youth chief Hishammuddin Hussein, with 54 nominations, Ahmad Zahid Hamidi with 38, Sabah Umno deputy chief Shafie Apdal with 32 and Higher Education Minister Khaled Nordin with 30.

syed hamid albarOn track to clear the minimum requisite of 20 nominations is Home Minister Syed Hamid Albar, who has 12.

Former Malacca chief minister Abdul Rahim Thamby Chik , who surprised his fellow party members by joining the fray during the weekend, quickly scalped his first four nominations - attracting attention by the speed at which he won support.

A party insider told Malaysiakini earlier this month that there were plans to increase the number of vice-presidencies from the current three to five in order to better reflect the huge growth in membership.

Khairy just a breath away

All eyes are also on outgoing Youth deputy chief Khairy Jamaluddin, who is just three nominations shy of making the cut for the topmost Youth post, due to be vacated by Hishammuddin.

Frontrunner Mukhriz Mahathir has shot ahead with 63 nominations, while former Selangor chief minister Mohd Khir Toyo has 27.

The minimum requisite for the Youth chief post is 39 nominations.

shahrizat sharizat abdul jalilHeading for a climax is the race for the topmost Wanita post, with incumbent No 2 Shahrizat Abdul Jalil securing enough nominations to challenge her boss Rafidah Aziz.

rafidah aziz 01While Shahrizat has declined to confirm if she would go for the Wanita chief post, currently held by Rafidah, she told the local press she would be issuing a statement in the next few days.

"I told them not to nominate me," she said, referring to a pact made with Rafidah whereby the latter is due to step down in her favour in June 2009.

But party watchers are still unsure if Shahrizat, who has 40 nominations, would take on the veteran Wanita leader, who still wields considerable clout. Rafidah has taken 75 nominations so far.

The pace at Puteri Umno has been more predictable, with frontrunners Shahaniza Shamsudin and Rosnah Abdul Rashid Shirlin widening their respective leads. Shahaniza has won 46 nominations, Rosnah has 43 while third-placed Ismailina Ismail has 26.