

Bersatu top three hold their forts in division polls

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Dr M, Muhyiddin and Mukhriz retain seats after winning uncontested

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PETALING JAYA: The top three leaders of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia look set to retain their respective posts of chairman, president and deputy president after they won their division polls uncontested, while incumbent vice-president Tan Sri Abdul Rashid Abdul Rahman expressed fears over vote-buying at the party polls.

The nominations, which closed at 3pm on Sunday, saw Bersatu chairman Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and deputy president Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir being retained as division chiefs of Langkawi, Pagoh and Jerlun respectively with no challengers.

Incumbent Bersatu youth wing (Armada) chief Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman managed to win the Muar division chief's post, giving him a leg up over those who may take him on for the post of Armada chief.

So far, sources said two others would be taking on Syed Saddiq for the post of Armada chief - lecturer Muzammil Ismail, and film producer Razalif Mohd Zain, both 30.

Muzammil, who is contesting the Padang Terap Bersatu division chief's post, is currently an Armada exco member.

Datuk Rina Harun, the Rural Development Minister and the incumbent Bersatu Women's chief, will be contesting the women's wing chief post at the Sepang Bersatu division.

She will be facing two other contenders for the position. Sources said that one of the contenders for the Bersatu national women's wing chief held by Rina is lawyer Azlina Mehtab Mohd Ishaq, who is the incumbent chief of Kepala Batas Bersatu division.

Rina and Azlina are formerly from Puteri Umno, the women's youth wing of Umno.

The sources also said that the contest for the three positions of Bersatu vice-president will be closely-watched as Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Redzuan Md Yusof is said to be climbing up the political ladder.

Redzuan, who is vying for the Masjid Tanah Bersatu division chief's post, is a supreme council member.

His main contender for the Masjid Tanah

Bersatu division chief's post is Datuk Mas Ermieyati Samsudin, who has a strong following there as she was the Masjid Tanah MP while she was in Umno before defecting to Bersatu.

Meanwhile, Abdul Rashid, 77, has yet to decide on whether he will hold on to his position, as he said he is thinking whether he should throw in the towel as age is catching up with him.

"I am still undecided on running for a supreme council post as I actually have no ambition to be in politics. I was trained as an administrator but was asked to join Bersatu to fight kleptocracy," said Abdul Rashid, who was a retired civil servant before heading the Election Commission from 2000 to 2008. He now heads the Electoral Reform Committee.

"Age is pressing me to live an easier life. The younger set of leaders in the party deserve to be given every opportunity to lead and serve," said Abdul Rashid.

He said that he is worried over an "Umno-like culture" in the party polls, as "there are many Umno deserters keen to contest".

"My worry is there is much interest, particularly from Umno deserters who joined the party after the 14th general election.

"They are bringing with them strong Umno culture and habits," he claimed.

He hoped that ethics and democracy will prevail at the Bersatu party polls.

"If money politics are allowed to freely determine the fate of the contestants, the future of the party would not be too bright," he added.

Sunday's nomination day for positions in Bersatu branches will be followed by polling from March 29, while the divisional polls will be on April 18.

Nomination for Bersatu supreme council positions will be open on March 16 and the annual general meeting will be held from June 25 to 28.

For the top three supreme council posts, only members with three years of membership can contest. As for the rest of the positions, they are open to those who have been members for one year or more.

Bersatu currently has 363,131 members nationwide and there are 2,950 branches in 189 divisions except in Sarawak.