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Razaleigh-Ibrahim

ACCEPTANCE PROVES MAHATHIR'S STATESMANSHIP: IBRAHIM

KUALA LUMPUR, May 9 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's willingness to accept Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) President Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah in Umno proves that he is a great statesman, a Kelantan Umno leader said today.

Senator Datuk Ibrahim Ali, the Kelantan Umno information chief, said it also proves that the Prime Minister is not a vindictive person.

Dr Mahathir was unsuccessfully challenged for the Umno presidency by Tengku Razaleigh in 1987, and subsequent events led to the the party being ruled unlawful and the Prime Minister saddled with political problems.

"The move by the Prime Minister is a positive political action taken for the sake of Malay unity, political stability and national development," Ibrahim said when commenting on Dr Mahathir's announcement yesterday that Tengku Razaleigh is keen to return to the Umno fold.

Ibrahim, an Umno Supreme Council member and former S46 Youth chief, hailed Tengku Razaleigh's decision, saying it will change the political scenario of the country, especially Kelantan.

He said no other matter can be more important for a leader and political fighter than making a decision that takes into account the interests of the religion, race and country.

"A credible leader is one who is willing to sacrifice and place public interest above everything else," he said.

Ibrahim described Tengku Razaleigh's re-entry into Umno as the most valuable gift to the people of Kelantan who, he said, are suffering since 1990 because they are under PAS-led opposition rule.

"This not only makes our (Barisan Nasional's) task to bring down the opposition party easier but with one stroke removes some of the perennial political difficulties in Kelantan," he added.

Ibrahim said there will be little meaning to Malay unity if the Malays in Kelantan continue to be left out of the drive for unity and major development.

Ibrahim is confident that all 12 state assemblymen from S46 in Kelantan will also join Umno, to boost Barisan Nasional's representation currently consisting of seven assemblymen. PAS has 24 assemblymen in the state.

He also expressed the hope that Umno leaders and members in Kelantan will accept the entry of S46 leaders and members with open arms.

Ibrahim does not see the entry of S46 members into Umno resulting in a fresh election being held in Kelantan, saying the Barisan Nasional is prepared to wait.

He also called on Umno leaders and members not to make wild speculations on the reason for Tengku Razaleigh's return to Umno.

"I believe what Dr Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh have done regarding this matter is not politically motivated and it should be seen specifically in the political context of Kelantan," he said. -- BERNAMA

AM/MT SK