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Umno-S46

RAZALEIGH AND RAIS ATTEND OPENING OF UMNO CONVENTION

By: Ahmad Zukiman Zain

KUALA LUMPUR, May 11 (Bernama) -- Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah today took another firm step forward in his expected return to Umno when he attended the opening session of the Umno Convention at the party's invitation.

The Parti Melayu Semangat 46 president showed up at the Putra World Trade Centre with his deputy Datuk Rais Yatim, also a former senior Umno leader.

Their presence capped a week of political announcements by both Umno and S46 leaders pointing to the likely en bloc return of the opposition party's members to Umno.

Umno president and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad started the ball rolling with his surprise announcement early in the week that Tengku Razaleigh might rejoin Umno.

The statement was confirmed the next day by Tengku Razaleigh who said he wanted to rejoin together with all the members of S46 for the sake of Malay unity.

To Rais, the convention evoked nostalgia.

"Nostalgic ... there is a strong drive for unity," he said.

The feeling was expected as this was the first time the two S46 leaders attended an Umno event since 1988 when they went into the opposition by forming S46.

Understandably, the two were the focus of attention by participants, guests and the media at the convention.

Several other political leaders who have dominated the headlines in recent weeks also drew their share of attention.

They included Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Salleh Said Keruak, who both have submitted letters of resignation from their respective post to the Prime Minister.

Also there were the Kedah assemblyman for Kuah, Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid, who is being speculated as likely to replace Osman, and Sabah Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Yong Teck Lee, who is expected to succeed Salleh.

Salleh is stepping down to fulfil the Barisan Nasional's 1994 election campaign pledge to rotate the chief minister's post among the three major communities in the state.

Yet another personality singled out for media attention today was Deputy Health Minister Datuk Dr Siti Zaharah Sulaiman who wants to challenge International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz for the Wanita Umno leadership at the party elections in October.

If the contest goes ahead, it will be the first challenge against Rafidah since she was elected to the post 12 years ago. -- BERNAMA

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