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TENGGU RAZALEIGH: IT'S UP TO UMNO

KOTA BAHARU, Nov 19 (Bernama) -- Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah today said he is prepared to consider contesting for the post of Deputy President in the coming Umno election if there is support from members and the Umno leadership.

However, the former Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) president who rejoined Umno in 1996 said he had not given a thought about going for the post at the moment.

The Deputy President's post fell vacant following the expulsion of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from the party for alleged sexual misconduct on Sept 3.

"I've not thought about it, I tell you sincerely, it's up to Umno. If it's the feeling of Umno that I can still be of use, We will think about it," he told reporters at the Sultan Ismail Petra Airport here upon arrival from Kuala Lumpur.

He was asked to comment on media reports naming him as one of the probable candidates for the party's No. 2 post at the party polls next year.

Asked on the possibility of Umno divisions in Kelantan nominating him for the post, he said: "I don't know, because I've no plans but if there are moves from within Umno...we shall see."

The former Finance Minister, however, expressed his willingness to offer his services to help in the political and economic front although he does not hold any post at the national level.

Asked on a suggestion by Pas that Kelantan Umno nominate him for the post of Umno deputy president, Tengku Razaleigh said Pas was actually "scared" of Umno and made such suggestion hoping that "Umno would not favour the person put up by Pas."

When asked on his relationship with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad -- who defeated him in the contest for the Umno presidency in the 1987 elections -- Tengku Razaleigh said their relationship was good.

After his defeat in that election, Tengku Razaleigh formed S46 and joined forces with Pas and defeated Umno in the 1990 and 1995 elections to form the Kelantan government.

However, in 1996 Tengku Razaleigh dissolved S46 and almost all its leaders and members rejoined Umno.

"I continue to support him (Dr Mahathir) and would like to see him continue as the party's leader," said Tengku Razaleigh.

"The country is now facing many problems and we should give our support to him. Don't create problems which can hinder economic recovery. The question of contests in the party is secondary," he said.

-- BERNAMA

RAR AO