

21 JUN 1999

Razaleigh-Comments

RAZALEIGH'S APPOINTMENT HAILED BY LEADERS

KUALA LUMPUR, June 21 (Bernama) -- Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's appointment as Kelantan Umno chief is an appropriate move in efforts to wrest back Kelantan from PAS, said Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said he hoped Razaleigh could lead Umno and other BN component parties in the state, especially in facing the coming general election because regaining Kelantan was the main agenda of Umno and BN.

"Tengku Razaleigh is a Kelantan-born who had long led Kelantan Umno. His capability to lead Kelantan Umno has definitely given hope to the Kelantan people to support and help Umno win the next general election," he told reporters at the Prime Minister's Department Complex in Putrajaya today.

Abdullah, a vice-president of Umno, is performing the duties of the deputy president.

Prime Minister and Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad last night relinquished the Kelantan Umno chief's post which he had held for 10 years, and appointed Tengku Razaleigh to succeed him.

Dr Mahathir announced the appointment when chairing a meeting of the Kelantan Umno Liaison Committee here at the residence of Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed.

Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak agreed that Tengku Razaleigh's appointment was appropriate in efforts to win back Kelantan.

"We as party members accept the appointment and will give our full cooperation to Kelantan Umno because our aim is to achieve victory," he said.

The overriding objective was to capture Kelantan in the next general election, the education minister told reporters after launching the "University on Air" programme of Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (Unitar) in Petaling Jaya.

Najib said the appointment of state Umno chiefs was the prerogative of the party president.

"I believe Dr Mahathir has studied all aspects and found Ku Li to be the most suitable leader to be given the trust as Kelantan Umno Liaison Committee chairman," he said.

Deputy Kelantan Umno chief Datuk Annuar Musa described the appointment as a piece of good news for the people of Kelantan and a move that would strengthen the party's position in the coming polls.

"I hope this is not good news for Ummno members alone. It ought to be good news for all the people of Kelantan," he told reporters after opening the new Kemas Nursery building in Kampung Hilir Serian in Sarawak.

Annuar, who is rural development minister, said the appointment showed Umno leaders, especially Dr Mahathir, had completely buried their differences in the interest of the party.

"As long as Kelantan politics is not in line with national politics, Kelantan will be left behind," he said.

Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said the appointment was a wise move, and the question of it causing a split in Kelantan Umno did not arise.

"I am confident all Umno members and former Semangat 46 members are happy and united on the appointment," he told reporters here.

Abdul Kadir, who is the culture, arts and tourism minister, said the

appointment would boost BN's chances of winning back Kelantan.

"The decision (appointment) is a smart one and the best to enable BN to take over from PAS in Kelantan and give the people of Kelantan a new lease of life," he added.

In PORT DICKSON, Negeri Sembilan Menteri Besar Tan Sri Mohd Isa Abdul Samad expressed confidence that Tengku Razaleigh would be able to carry out his duties well in the coming general election and that Umno would regain power in Kelantan.

"Kelantan Umno is actually strong now and with Tengku Razaleigh heading the State Umno Liaison Committee, I believe the people of Kelantan, not just Umno members but a majority of former supporters of Semangat 46 and 'old timers', will continue to support Umno and BN," he said.

This was because Tengku Razaleigh had contributed a lot to Kelantan when he was in the government, Isa told reporters after opening a motivational course.

"I also believe that he is still influential and can be a strong force in our bid to recapture Kelantan," he added.

In KOTA BAHARU, Kelantan Umno secretary Datuk Ahmad Shahibuddin Mohd Nor said the appointment of Tengku Razaleigh, the former Semangat 46 president, would strengthen unity among Umno members.

He said the move would unite the former Semangat 46 members who had returned to Umno.

"The loss by Umno and BN in past elections (1990 dan 1995) in Kelantan was due to a split in Umno following the formation of Semangat 46 which went into a pact with PAS," he said when contacted.

Kelantan Umno Information Chief Datuk Zainal Abidin Abdul Kadir said the appointment was timely as Kelantan Umno was in need of a leader who could unite Umno members, especially those who were formerly in Semangat 46, more effectively.

"We thank Tengku Razaleigh for his willingness to assume the heavy responsibility in facing the coming general election," he added.

Kelantan BN Secretary Datuk Ariffin Abdul Hamid said Tengku Razaleigh was an "old timer" in politics whose experience could enhance the party, including by drawing the full support of Umno veterans and former Semangat 46 members.

"A right appointment in determining BN's victory in the coming general election," he said.

Kelantan MCA deputy chief Leong Su Siang said MCA was confident that with Tengku Razaleigh's leadership and his loyalty to Umno, the dignity of Umno and BN would be redeemed in Kelantan.

"I fully support Ku Li's appointment and urge all communities, especially the Chinese, to support him...I feel that under Ku Li's leadership Umno and BN will be stronger," he added.

Kelantan MIC chief M. Kuppusamy also expressed support for Tengku Razaleigh's appointment and the hope that he would be able to help implement development after PAS allegedly failed to do so.

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