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Razaleigh is Kelantan Umno chief

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight sprang a surprise hours after the party concluded its annual general assembly by announcing the appointment of Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah as the Kelantan party chief.

The appointment of the Gua Musang MP and former Semangat 46 president was made at a meeting of the Kelantan Umno liaison committee at Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed's residence here.

Both Dr Mahathir and Tengku Razaleigh were present at the meeting. The former Finance Minister and Umno vice-president replaced Dr Mahathir who had been heading the State committee since 1990.

The appointment of Tengku Razaleigh as Kelantan liaison chairman was widely speculated as the "surprise" which Dr Mahathir had promised the Press before the assembly.

Speaking after tonight's meeting, Dr Mahathir said he tendered his resignation at the meeting and suggested that Tengku Razaleigh be appointed to succeed him. This, said the Prime Minister, was agreed to by members present.

Datuk Annuar Musa remains deputy chairman. He was not at the meeting as he had to make an official trip to Sarawak.

Tengku Razaleigh thanked Dr Mahathir for the confidence in him and pledged he would commit himself fully to winning the support of the Kelantan people.

He said this was a responsibility which he accepted for the sake of Kelantan Umno and expressed confidence the State's voters would choose Barisan Nasional in the coming general election.

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