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Razaleigh: Let's unite and fight forces out to ruin us

Sarban Singh

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Kelantan Umno chief Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah today appealed to all political parties and ethnic groups to unite and fight external forces which had since July 1997 attempted to ruin the country's economy and create chaos.

The former Parti Melayu Semangat 46 leader said political parties should put aside their differences if they genuinely had the interests of the people at heart.

He said Malaysia had neutralised the first attack through its selective capital controls introduced in September last year but there was no guarantee it would not recur.

"If we are willing to let bygones be bygones and let the past be a lesson, then I don't see why we cannot reconcile to safeguard the people and the country from foreigners such as the rogue currency speculators.

"We cannot remain in conflict forever. We must find ways to reconcile, be it Indians, Muslims or Chinese," he said, adding that this effort must be made by all parties.

Citing an example, Tengku Razaleigh said in the aftermath of the 1969 racial riots, some political parties joined the Alliance.

Among these were Pas, Gerakan and the People's Progressive Party. (Pas was however removed in 1977).

"We must recall what brought about the differences which led us to going separate ways. Let's see whether it has been worth it," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh was speaking to reporters after opening the Indian Progressive Front's eighth annual general assembly.

Also present was IPF president Senator M.G. Pandithan.

Earlier in his speech, Tengku Razaleigh said the rogue currency speculators would attempt to "plunder" Malaysia again if the people were seen to be disunited.

He said the external economic forces, supported by the foreign media, were "waiting like a hungry tiger to pounce on us".

"They know their first attack has been neutralised by our capital control measures and the economic upturn. But there will be more attempts if we are weak," he said.

Asked whether political parties such as Pas would accept the idea, Tengku Razaleigh said Pas could if it was willing to accept the Barisan Nasional's struggles like it did in the past.

He said in June 1995 when he was still in Semangat 46, he had sought the consent of Pas leaders in Kelantan to meet Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to discuss the matter. His request was approved.

However, when Dr Mahathir was asked by reporters upon his return from Bosnia to confirm the meeting, which the Prime Minister did, Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat blew his top.

"I never got a chance to brief the Pas leaders on my meeting with Dr Mahathir because Nik Aziz was making all sorts of accusations," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh said for the sake of Malay unity he decided to dissolve Semnagt 46 and join Umno.

He said Semangat 46 had many MPs, State assemblymen, State executive councillors and was co-leading a State Government with one Deputy Menteri Besar.

"But we gave that all up as there were more pressing matters to be addressed," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh said he was thankful to God that when the ringgit and the stock market were attacked by currency speculators, he was already in the Barisan Nasional.

"I am grateful because the move worked and saved the country from destruction. And after coming back to Umno, I am still able to contribute to the party and the country," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh said Malaysia was now being watched by all who were keen to see if the economic crisis would be followed by a political one.

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