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Razaleigh-Umno

KU LI: I CANNOT RUN AWAY FROM RESPONSIBILITIES

KUALA LUMPUR, March 9 (Bernama) -- Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah said today he cannot run away from the responsibility entrusted to him in Umno no matter how heavy it was so long it was within his capabilities.

The Kelantan Umno liaison chief said positions in Umno were not some kind of employment or an honour but a responsibility that must be shouldered based on the confidence of the people whom he would lead.

This confidence must come from the grassroots and cannot be determined by the higher-ups, he said in a statement in response to the call by the Umno leadership to announce his stand whether he would be contesting in the May 11 party elections.

Tengku Razaleigh said in the history of Umno many top party leaders became leaders because they were asked to lead and not by forcing the grassroots to accept their leadership.

"Past leaders did not make announcements maybe because it was the Malay custom, they feel shame to beg to become a leader.

"A contest in the party is not a boxing competition to win prizes from the victory so much so we have to make an announcement first.

"Instead, a contest in the party is to shoulder a responsibility. What more the situation in Umno then was as critical as today where the people want to see how far the Umno leadership can attract the Malays to be with them," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh said elections for the Malay leadership must be for the future of the Malay race and not for the interest of any individual.

"That is the reason why previous Umno leaders waited for the grassroots to determine the right people to lead them," he said.

On nominations by Umno divisions for posts up for grabs in the party elections, he said: "If the people at the grassroots feel I'm not qualified or did not fulfil the criteria to lead, I'm prepared to remain as a gurkha."

"To me, whether I have a position or not is not important. Being a Malay who wishes to remain as a fighter for the race, I believe I can and many other Umno members can contribute to the Malays without making any announcements," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh also thanked certain Umno leaders for suggesting that he contest for the vice-president's post in the party elections.

"To me this is a new trend where there seems to be a pact among them to determine and fix positions for others in our party," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh said he was surprised over the numerous speculations being bandied about on his position in the run-up to the polls.

Referring to the speculations in the newspapers on his position, he said: "Those who wrote 'not contesting' stories also eventually wrote 'contesting' stories although I have repeatedly made the same statement on the matter."

"Why am I being treated like a ball, kicked here and there?," he said.

Umno divisions started nominating candidates for party posts from March 1.

So far, 17 divisions had held their meetings with all of them nominating Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for the president and deputy president's posts.

Dr Mahathir is Umno president while Abdullah is the vice-president performing the duties of the deputy president.

The deputy president's post fell vacant following the expulsion of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from Umno on Sept 3, 1998.

The trend of nominating Dr Mahathir and Abdullah was in line with the supreme council's advice to the divisions to propose them for the two top posts.

This, however, did not stop speculations on the likelihood of Tengku Razaleigh being nominated to contest one of the two posts. -- BERNAMA

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