

17 JUN 2003

Umno-Ku Li

KU LI: NO PLANS TO CONTEST TOP UMNO POST

KUALA LUMPUR, June 17 (Bernama) -- Former finance minister Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah said today that he has no plans to contest the top post in Umno and he accepts Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as the successor to Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He expressed surprise that his name has been linked to a possible contest for the top post.

"Furthermore, I am not someone with position. I would like to state sincerely that I have no plans towards this end," said Tengku Razaleigh, affectionately known as Ku Li, in a statement here.

Tengku Razaleigh, the Gua Musang Umno head, said everybody knew that Dr Mahathir had picked Abdullah as his successor, and this, according to Ku Li, is appropriate because Abdullah is Dr Mahathir's deputy.

"I, too, accept and support that choice," he said when commenting on the prime minister's statement in an interview published on Sunday that anyone who challenged Abdullah would lose.

Dr Mahathir, who will retire from his government and party posts in October, said this when asked if he thought people like Ku Li or former deputy prime minister Tan Sri Musa Hitam would emerge again to vie for the presidency.

In the interview with *Mingguan Malaysia*, Dr Mahathir was reported to have said that he did not think a contest would happen, and if it did the challengers would lose.

Tengku Razaleigh said he had not been moving around much except in the Gua Musang constituency and other areas as directed by the Umno Supreme Council.

"To me the more important thing is to continue contributing towards strengthening unity in the party by getting all quarters involved and helping to seek good for the Malays on the whole," he said.

He said this had to be done to face the next general election or other challenges confronting the party.

Meanwhile, Supreme Council member Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said a scramble for the deputy presidency, which Dr Mahathir feared could happen, was unlikely to occur because all quarters fully understood their responsibilities.

Members should take Dr Mahathir's caution as the parting advice before his retirement from national politics, he said.

"There is nothing to worry about. Everything will go on smoothly, God willing. But all members must clearly understand their responsibilities and the basis of the party's struggle," he told reporters after opening the Croatian Contemporary Graphic Art Exhibition here.

However, Abdul Kadir expected keen contests for the vice-presidency and Supreme Council seats next year because there would be vacancies.

-- BERNAMA

SOP AHH ROS YBY