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Umno-Razaleigh (Kelantan)

IT'S JUST AN EXCITING TALE, SAYS RAZALEIGH OF HIS NOMINATION

GUA MUSANG, July 17 (Bernama) -- Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah, who today received nomination from his Gua Musang Umno division for the party presidency, reiterated today that his decision to contest was just to ensure that democracy prevailed within the party.

It was not intended to be his roadmap to become the country's prime minister, he said, describing his single nomination so far as "satu cerita seronok" (an exciting tale).

His sole intention was to make Umno members realise that they had the right to nominate anybody as their leader in accordance with the democratic process provided under the party's constitution, said the former finance minister.

He said he would not be dissatisfied even if he did not get enough nominations for the number one post.

"It'll up to members. If the members refuse to support me or are afraid to support me, that's their right. I'll not be dissatisfied," he said at a press conference after officiating the Gua Musang Umno delegates conference here.

In this respect, he said he was glad of the nomination from Gua Musang which showed that party members in the division were fully aware of their constitutional rights.

Asked why he chose to go for the top post, Ku Li as he is popularly known, he said it was his wake-up call to Umno members although not liked by man.

He said when he offered himself as a presidential candidate it did not mean that he wanted to become prime minister because a post in the party and a post in the government were two different things.

"If I contest and I win, I'm not contesting a post in the government. I'm contesting a post to lead the party. Don't confuse the two," he

said.

He also rejected perceptions that his action would cause disunity within the party, saying that he was not challenging anybody but offering himself as a candidate.

The Umno presidency fell vacant following the retirement of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad in October last year, and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, who has received all but one nominations to lead the party from Umno divisions so far, is the acting president.

On views expressed by various quarters that he should not contest for the presidency as Abdullah had shown excellent performance when he led the Barisan Nasional (BN) to a thumping victory in the recent general election, Ku Li said it was irrelevant.

"This in party polls, that was the general election. The mandate was given to the BN and we all have supported and worked for it. He (Abdullah) is a leader and should be congratulated, but not necessarily everything is okay," he said.

Ku Li said he was even perplexed when an action by "an insignificant leader" like him to contest the top post had faced objections from various quarters.

"If I'm not popular why should they be afraid of me? Why is every newspaper attacking me? I'm still a member of the MT (Supreme Council) and I'm still holding the party's flag. I must defend the party. I'm not challenging anybody.

"If members say I'm not qualified, then no need to support me. But a decision, we must make. Why are they not comfortable with my nomination? We must decide what we want. If we make the wrong decision, we're doomed," he said.

Tengku Razaleigh also hoped that Umno would revert to the old practice like the time when he challenged Dr Mahathir for the presidency in 1987 because at present there were too many obstacles to intending candidates.

"When I challenged Dr Mahathir I needed only one nomination but now one needs at least 58 nominations," he said.

The rules requiring potential candidates to obtain certain number of nominations were introduced following Ku Li's challenge in 1987 which lead to a split within the party. Ku Li who lost in the contest then set up a splinter party called Parti Semangat 46 which had been dissolved and its members had returned to Umno.

When asked why he did not raise the matter in the MT meeting, he said he was alone and even if he did, nobody would listen.

"Just because I didn't raise the issue didn't mean that I've no right. Until the Umno constitution is amended, I will still have that right. I respect the MT but it must also respect the right of the members," he said.

Asked whether he would continue to offer himself as a candidate in the future, he said: "Only God knows."

He said the party struggle must be continued not for personal interest but for the future generation.

Meanwhile, in his speech earlier, Tengku Razaleigh talked at length about democracy.

"Each Umno member pays RM1 annual fee and the leaders too pay RM1. Everybody has the same right. They've one vote, just like you all," he told the delegates.

To combat money politics, he proposed that Umno president and deputy president be elected through popular votes.

The one who received the highest votes from members nationwide would be declared the president and second highest as deputy president, he said.

Tengku Razaleigh also proposed that the party president could only hold office for a maximum of three terms.

These proposals if agreed would end money politics and would ensure that only those elected and supported by party members would lead the party, he said.

-- BERNAMA

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