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Razaleigh-Support

UMNO VETERAN DEFENDS KU LI'S INTENTION TO VIE FOR TOP POST

KOTA BAHARU, July 7 (Bernama) -- Umno veteran Tan Sri Hussein Ahmad today defended Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah's plans to vie for a top post in Umno in the party elections in September, saying it is a move to keep democracy alive in Umno.

He said the recent announcement by Tengku Razaleigh that he was prepared to contest if he was nominated for an appropriate post must be viewed as one way to further strengthen democratic practices in Umno.

The younger set of leaders in Umno should not misconstrue Tengku Razaleigh's intention, he said.

"Tengku Razaleigh made the announcement merely to prove democracy still exists in Umno. Umno leaders should not ask party members not to contest for president or deputy president's post as vying for posts is a democratic right in Umno.

"I know Ku Li (Tengku Razaleigh) subscribes to Umno's struggles, he is not after any post in Umno. To me, his action is merely to show democracy exists in Umno," the former Umno information chief told Bernama.

Tengku Razaleigh, who is also Gua Musang Umno pro tem head, recently revealed his readiness to go for a "suitable and appropriate" post in Umno, if nominated by divisions at their delegates conferences.

Following the announcement, talk surfaced that Tengku Razaleigh intends to contest one of Umno's top two posts -- president or deputy president.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is the acting Umno president while his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak is performing the duties of deputy president.

It became an issue as the supreme council, Umno's highest decision-making body, had made a decision that the two posts should not be contested.

Tengku Razaleigh's statement triggered comments from Umno leaders,

urging him not to go for the top two posts to avert a split in the party.

Responding to the leaders' statements, Hussein said: "Tengku Razaleigh is a veteran Umno leader who has gone through the bitter experience when

Umno was divided and he will surely not want to see a repeat of it.

"Believe me, Ku Li will not split Umno anymore," he said.

(In 1987, Tengku Razaleigh challenged Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad for the president's post and lost. He then formed Parti Semangat Melayu 46, a splinter party of Umno.

(He also went for the deputy president's post in 1981 and 1984 but was defeated by Tan Sri Musa Hitam).

Hussein said whether Tengku Razaleigh vied for the Number One post in Umno or otherwise should not be an issue.

"What warrants attention from Umno top leaders is the attitude of many grassroots leaders jostling to become delegates to the extent of giving rise to money politics.

"I've received information money politics is still being practised not only in Kelantan but nationwide. Many are prepared to "buy over" party posts," he claimed.

-- BERNAMA

SHI RAR RON TOM