

15 MAR 2004

Election-Rithauddeen (News Focus)

"I WANT TO SEE KELANTAN DEVELOPED BEFORE I DIE" SAYS RITHAUDDEEN

By: Mohd Bakri Darus

KOTA BAHARU, March 15 (Bernama) -- "Before I die, I want to see Kelantan developing fast to emerge as one of the developed states," said veteran politician and illustrious son of the state, Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen Tengku Ismail.

To achieve that, Tengku Rithauddeen, 75, said the Kelantan people should make a change by giving the Barisan Nasional the mandate to administer the state when they cast their votes in the March 21 general election.

The former Foreign Minister, who had also held the Defence, Trade and Industry portfolio in his career, said he is very disappointed with the PAS administration in Kelantan, which has been left far behind when compared with the other states.

"Like the other ordinary rakyat, I hope and dream of a Kelantan state that is developed, in physical and religious aspects.

"I am not an old man...(but) a senior man...I know the situation for I have been to so many countries, it is vital that we are not left too far behind in term of development," said Rithauddeen, who was the former Member of Parliament for Kota Baharu for several terms.

Tengku Rithauddeen, like the other "sons" of Kelantan, wants to see the state standing shoulder-to-shoulder with the other states in all aspects of development, stressing that Kelantan still needs a lot of amenities and infrastructures like roads, schools and hospitals.

The image of Kelantan that is usually associated with the poverty of its people, should be corrected by serious efforts of the state government to eradicate poverty, he said.

Tengku Rithauddeen, who had held the post of deputy chairman of the Kelantan state Umno Liaison Committee and head of the Kota Baharu Umno division for 26 years, said his wish as well as that of the Kelantanese people could only be realised if the BN returns to rule the state.

He said the Kelantan people have no choice but to give the mandate to the BN to return to administer the state, and bring back the glorious days when the land was also known as the "Che Siti Wan Kembang" state.

He said since PAS took over the state in 1990, Kelantan had not undergone any changes in terms of development.

Referring to the BN manifesto "Building A Glorious Kelantan" that was specially directed at the state, he invited the voters to study and think carefully over the BN's offer of a better future.

Tengku Rithauddeen is certain that the 11-point manifesto would meet the needs of all walks of life in Kelantan where the people are known for their strong belief in Islam because the manifesto gives emphasis to efforts to uphold the faith.

On the BN candidates in Kelantan, he said they are a combination of new and old faces with different academic and professional backgrounds, including the ulamaks whom the voters should support.

"The Kelantan people give such a high priority to religion, so the mixture of candidates with high academic and religious background and professionals should be attractive to them," he said.

He said Umno and the Kelantan BN led by Datuk Mustapa Mohamed is getting stronger because of the strong support of the rakyat.

The Kelantan people, he said, should not doubt the leadership and capability of Mustapa who is seen as the next Menteri Besar of Kelantan if

the BN were to win the elections.

"I know who Mustapa is, he is an honest, disciplined and hard-working man," he said.

"If the BN wins, 'Insya-Allah' Kelantan will be led by him (Mustapa). I see that he is contesting in the state seat of Air Lanas and the parliamentary seat of Jeli, so if Kelantan can be returned to BN rule, he will be appointed as the Menteri Besar," he said.

Tengku Rithauddeen said in term of religion, there is no difference between Mustapa and the other state leaders because Mustapa believes strongly in Islam.

"I know him so well, I have absolute confidence in his ability to bring the state to a high level of development, and to bring about a more comprehensive religious programme throughout the state," he said.

He also believed that Mustapa would be assisted by a capable exco line-up that can ensure that the state would not take too long to develop.

Ahmad Rithauddeen said the general election is the best time for the people in Kelantan to change the government since the PAS leaders had failed to develop the state or to uphold Islam to any obvious level.

He said he also foresees drastic changes in Kelantan after March 21.

"Insya-Allah, I, as a senior person, can feel the coming changes in Kelantan after March 21. After 14 years under PAS, the people want change and they are now giving their full support to the BN," he said.

PAS, he said, has run out of issues to oppose the BN and Umno and to influence the voters to retain their present leaders.

"There is no issue, the government policies are good, the Anwar issue (former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim) is no more, no other issues," he said.

He said the appointment of Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as prime minister to replace Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad last October 31, has won over the people of Kelantan because Abdullah himself comes from a renowned ulamak family.

"Pak Lah is the son of a religious 'tok guru', an ulamak family, and his religious education is deep. The Kelantanese people want religious people... the old people see him (Abdullah) as an honest and religious person because he is a descendant of religious people," he said.

Rithauddeen said these are the qualities of leaders liked by the Kelantanese people and it is only right that they allow the clean and smart leadership of Abdullah to come to Kelantan by casting their votes for the BN.

-- BERNAMA

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