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Ku Li pledges support for Abdullah as president

By Zubaidah Abu Bakar

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. - Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah today pledged support for Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as Umno's sixth president and said his bid for the presidency this year was his last.

He said no one should question Abdullah's position as he had won the post uncontested, receiving nominations from almost all the Umno divisions.

"He will be made Umno president," he said, adding that everyone should support Abdullah to enable him to provide an effective leadership.

Tengku Razaleigh said since Abdullah was the ultimate choice of the party grassroots, he would enjoy undivided support to carry out his duties, particularly in implementing the Malay agenda and economic programmes for the people.

As of today, when 185 Umno divisions have met, Tengku Razaleigh obtained only a single nomination for the party presidency - from his own Gua Musang division.

"I will not offer myself to contest (the presidency), I will be too old (by then)," said the 67-year-old Kelantan prince.

Tengku Razaleigh admitted he felt frustrated as he did not get enough nominations to contest but said he accepted the reality that the majority of the divisions wanted Abdullah to be the sixth Umno president.

"He received a lot of nominations and will be the party president.

"There are no sour grapes here ... there is nothing personal. As a gentleman, I must accept (the decision of the divisions).

"What is wrong with that? I think it is good, we will work together," he said, adding that he had also accepted his loss to then Umno president, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, in 1987.

Asked whether he thought the party members were not brave enough to openly throw their support behind him as reflected by the nominations, Tengku Razaleigh said there were many interpretations.

"To me, the case (of him contesting the presidency at the September party elections) is closed and I accept the decision of the divisions. There is nothing to talk about anymore."

He reiterated that his decision to contest the party presidency was to remind members that they had a duty to perform as well as the right to stand for party elections.

Asked how he evaluated Abdullah as Prime Minister, Tengku Razaleigh said:

"Nothing happened so far ... the country is intact, lights still on ... everything is well. It is not a problem."

The Gua Musang MP had called for a Press conference at his residence in Jalan Langgak Golf here to express his support for Abdullah as the new party president.

On opinions that this failure to get sufficient nominations meant that it was the end of his political career, Tengku Razaleigh said it would not be so.

"That's what people said to me when I fought Dr Mahathir. But I survived, even when I was drifting without a party because I was not able to join Umno Baru.

"I am back in Umno, in the supreme council until today. Who knows what will happen but I will survive," he added.

Asked if he would, if offered, accept to be an appointed supreme council

member for another term, Tengku Razaleigh said he would cross the bridge when he came to it.

On the controversy involving the Gua Musang Wanita Umno meeting, he said the division had no problem accepting the management committee's decision to recognise the meeting held on July 16.

He said the division would try to resolve the problem of the Wanita members who now had two leaders.

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