



Ku Li to be Umno's Galas candidate
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Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah will accept to become Umno's candidate for the Galas by-election to be held on Nov 4.

Nominations are set for Oct 24.

Last Saturday, upon his return from abroad, the Kelantan prince and Umno's most famous dissident announced that he had accepted his party's offer to head the BN campaign for the seat but declined to be drawn on the issue of candidacy.

Razaleigh said he would first meet with Umno president and Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak later today before any further decision.

By yesterday, however, Razaleigh, after having closeted with advisers and aides, decided to move the process of his rehabilitation in Umno a stage further by becoming the candidate.

Deputy Prime Minister and BN lead campaigner Muhyiddin Yassin had earlier proposed that Razaleigh not only head the BN campaign but also become its candidate.

The seat fell vacant after the death through illness of the PAS incumbent Hashim Sulaima who prised the seat from its BN stranglehold in the 2008 election.

Galas is one of three state wards in the parliamentary constituency of Gua Musang which Razaleigh has been winning for Umno since 1969.

Muhyiddin's proposal smacked of a shrewd strategy of muzzling Razaleigh on the issue of payment of oil royalty to Kelantan, a sore point between the BN-led federal government and the PAS-dominated state.

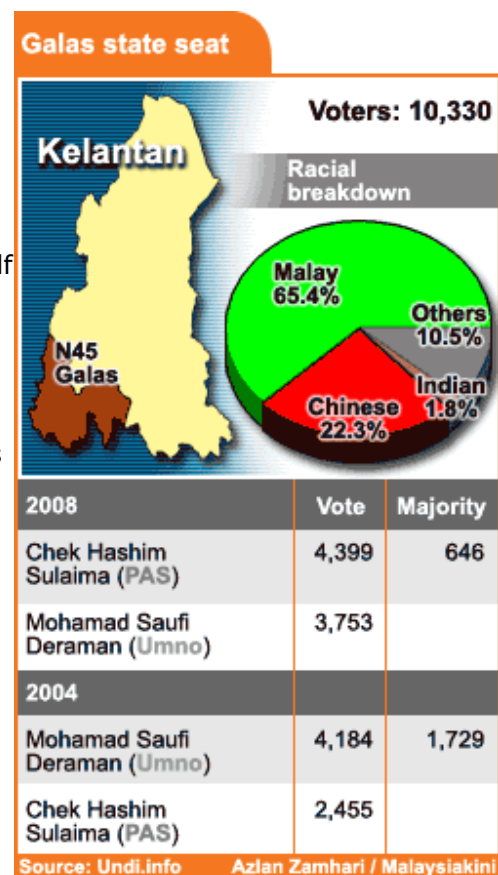
Razaleigh had aligned himself with the state on the issue, which is now the subject of a suit filed by the Kelantan government.

Out of the political wilderness

By accepting to become not only chair of the BN campaign but also its candidate, Razaleigh puts himself in an anomalous position of being dissident-turned-defender on not only the oil royalty issue but a host of other matters on which he has tread a fine line of dissent from the government's practices and policies.

In the last two years, observers noted that Razaleigh's treading this line of dissent was premised on the assumption that Umno would implode from the raft of scandals and crises that have besieged the government of Najib Razak and that of his predecessor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

But the momentum of a 53-year incumbency is not



easily dissipated and Umno has held on, leaving its most famous dissident who, for the better part of three decades has believed it is his manifest destiny to become PM, wan and tired.

Now at 73, Ku Li, as he is popularly known, has decided to opt for a different strategy of deference to necessity and turn dissidence into conformity.

Observers will watch how his opting to come from out of the political wilderness into the mainstream of Umno politics would help him realise his aspiration, which is to restore the party to his pre-Dr Mahathir Mohamad eminence.

Ku Li blames Umno's present decline on its departure from the best practices of the pre-Mahathir era.

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