

Ku Li: Sabah crossover a possibility
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Another leader within the Barisan Nasional fold warned today at a forum in Subang Jaya that Sabah MPs may yet abandon ship.
MCPX

Speaking to a gathering of Umno members this afternoon, Gua Musang parliamentarian and Umno stalwart Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah told of a chance encounter with PKR adviser Anwar Ibrahim recently.

"I was on the same plane with him (Anwar) and I asked him 'How confident he was that he will form the next government?' said Tengku Razaleigh.

"He smiled and said 'I'm very confident'" the 71-year-old veteran told a stunned crowd.

tengku razaleigh forum 260408 ku li speaking Tengku Razaleigh, also known as Ku Li, explained that the opposition's repeated boasts to the media about taking over is not far-fetched at all.

"All it takes is 30 members to make the switch and we will have a new federal government," he said.

In the March 8 polls, BN lost its two-thirds majority in Parliament when its candidates won only 140 seats. Opposition parties PKR, DAP and PAS won the remaining 82 seats.

The three parties - now called Pakatan Rakyat - also captured four states in Selangor, Penang, Kedah and Perak while PAS retained its control over Kelantan.

Sabah Umno different

PKR is now said to be courting BN reps especially in Sabah and Sarawak, in a bid to wrest the required 30 parliamentary seats to form the federal government.

Furthermore, if one remembers history well, said Ku Li, Sabah Umno is very different from its Peninsular counterparts.

Before 1988, Sabah Umno did not exist. But following a confidence crisis over Umno chief Tun Datu Mustapha's leadership of Muslims in the state, the party was de-registered.

Out of its ashes rose Sabah Umno, Ku Li reminded the crowd.

"As such, you can't expect Sabah Umno to feel the same way about Umno's struggle to uphold Malay rights as us," said the former finance minister.

Added to the fact that Anwar was the man who had helped set up Umno in Sabah then, his relationship with many Sabah leaders remains strong, said Ku Li.

Tengku Razaleigh, who is eyeing the Umno presidency, said he informed party chief

Abdullah Ahmad Badawi of this but was brushed aside.

tengku razaleigh forum 260408 brochure"Politics is about possibilities and Sabahans crossing over is very high up on the list," he told reporters after the forum.

Asked to comment why Sabah politicians may want join PKR, he said that they were still unhappy despite the prime minister's visit there early this month.

"Some of them are not happy with the number of cabinet positions they received while others feel that Sabah has been left behind. But the reports I've got point to dissatisfaction among the people there," said Tengku Razaleigh.

The Kelantan prince is not the first senior BN politician to voice his concerns as Deputy Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak also expressed similar sentiments yesterday.

Will run for president

During the forum with former Selangor Umno leaders Mazlan Harun and Fahmi Ibrahim, Ku Li repeated his intention to contest for the presidency.

He told the members, who were mostly from Subang Jaya, that if he gets the mandate, he intends to "go all the way".

Tengku Razaleigh was responding to a question if he would continue if Abdullah facilitates a transfer of power to Najib before party polls in December.

On the transfer of power, Ku Li was of the opinion that it wasn't right. Repeating his earlier comments he said there was no provision in the party constitution for transfers of power.

"Party politics is not about inheritance like from a father to son. Umno is a democratic party and changes in the leadership should take place at the polls," said Ku Li.

"If we want the other people to respect Umno again, democracy must be returned to the party, starting with picking electoral candidates to the party president."

He also urged Umno members to help him make this change by nominating him as a candidate for the president's post.

Besides Subang Jaya, Tengku Razaleigh will also be addressing members in Batu Pahat, Sungai Petani and Sabah in the weeks ahead.

"We've not really planned anything but as long as I'm invited, I will go and speak to the grassroots everywhere," said the Umno veteran.