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MAHATHIR-PAS

ALOR STAR, FEB. 16<sup>82</sup> (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER (DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR MOHAMAD) IS LIKELY TO BE CHALLENGED BY PAS STRONGMAN FADZIL MOHAMED NOOR IF HE SEEKS RE-ELECTION TO THE KUBANG PASU PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY IN THE COMING GENERAL ELECTION.

SPECULATION IS RIFE AMONG UMNO AND PAS INSIDERS HERE THAT THE PRIME MINISTER WILL DEFEND THE SEAT AGAINST THE PAS VICE-PRESIDENT IN A STRAIGHT FIGHT.

DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR WON THE KUBANG PASU SEAT IN THE 1978 GENERAL ELECTION BY DEFEATING HALIM ARSHAD OF PAS WITH 8,245-VOTE MAJORITY.

ON THE OTHER HAND, ENCIK FADZIL, ALSO KNOWN AS ALI MOHAMAD NOOR, LOST TO DATUK SENU ABDUL RAHMAN, THE FORMER UMNO SECRETARY GENERAL, IN THE KUALA KEDAH PARLIAMENTARY CONSTITUENCY, BY 879 VOTES.

+THERE IS A STRONG POSSIBILITY THAT ENCIK FADZIL WILL SWITCH TO KUBANG PASU THIS TIME IN ORDER TO GIVE THE PRIME MINISTER A TOUGHER FIGHT,+ SAID A PAS SOURCE.--BERNAMA MORE 1808/HM

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THE SOURCE DESCRIBED ENCIK FADZIL AS THE MOST SUITABLE CANDIDATE TO FACE THE PRIME MINISTER BECAUSE +HE IS AN INTELECTUAL AND HAS LEADERSHIP QUALITIES.+

THE SOURCE RULED OUT THE POSSIBILITY OF PITTING PAS SECRETARY GENERAL DATUK ABU BAKAR OMAR AGAINST DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR BECAUSE DATUK ABU BAKAR WOULD BE DEFENDING HIS KOTA SETAR PARLIAMENTARY SEAT.

HOWEVER, AN UMNO LEADER HERE SAID PAS WOULD BE +ASKING FOR THE MOON+ IF THE PARTY BELIEVED IT COULD SNATCH THE KUBANG PASU SEAT FROM THE PRIME MINISTER.

HE SAID DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR WAS A VERY POPULAR FIGURE, NOT ONLY AMONG KUBANG PASU RESIDENTS, BUT AMONG ALL MALAYSIANS.

DATUK ABU BAKAR OMAR WOULD NOT CONFIRM OR DENY THE POSSIBILITY OF ENCIK FADZIL STANDING AGAINST DATUK SERI DR. MAHATHIR.

+WHATEVER IS SAID ABOUT OUR CANDIDATES, ABOUT WHERE THEY WILL STAND, IS MERE SPECULATION,+ HE ADDED. --BERNAMA 1812/  
HM