

Only a token challenge, says Dr M

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ALOR STAR, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today described his opponent Dr Azizan Ismail in the contest for the Kubang Pasu parliamentary seat as a "token challenge" from Pas.

The Prime Minister said Pas had fielded the virtually unknown homeopathy doctor merely to ensure that votes from party members and supporters in the constituency did not go to the Barisan Nasional.

"God willing, the Barisan Nasional will be returned with a bigger majority here and elsewhere," Dr Mahathir

told a cheering crowd of supporters at the Kubang Pasu Umno office after he was announced as the Barisan Nasional candidate.

Dr Azizan, 37, a former lecturer at the Temenggong Ibrahim Teachers' Training College, was an Abim member before he joined Pas in 1983.

He furthered his studies in traditional medicine in Germany in 1984 on a scholarship from the Prime Minister's Department.

"I will win this seat for the party," he said at the nomination centre at the Kubang Pasu District Office.

The Barisan Nasional candidates for the State seats of Jitra and Tanjung in the parliamentary constituency are Menteri Besar Datuk Paduka Osman Aroff and State Executive Councillor Haji Hanafi Ramli.

They face farmer Haji Kamal Ismail and teacher Haji Ahmad Yusof from Pas.

Haji Kamal, 32, is a new face while Haji Ahmad failed in three previous attempts.

The Kubang Pasu District Office is about 200m from Jitra town.

At 8.30am, policemen

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Shouts of support from 3,000 strong crowd

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arrived to patrol the area and man the District Office gate.

Across the road which leads to Changloon, a makeshift eating stall was put up and the owner and his helpers were busy arranging chairs and tables.

At 9.20am, some 400 men, most of them wearing white skull caps, were seen marching towards the district office. Leading them were the three candidates from Pas.

They stopped at the gate where a police officer told them that only the candidates, their proposers and seconders and a hundred supporters would be allowed in.

The candidates and their supporters walked into the compound to shouts of "Allahu Akbar".

They walked up to the district operations room serving as the nomination centre on the first floor and filed their papers.

Dr Mahathir, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah and the other Barisan Nasional candidates went to the Umno office in Jitra.

From there, they walked to the District Office, followed by a crowd of three thousand people, who at intervals shouted "Hidup Barisan Nasional", "Hidup Mahathir" and "Berjaya Mahathir".

The Prime Minister

waved to the people on both sides of the road. At the gate, he turned and waved to the Pas supporters. Some waved back.

At 12.30pm, all the candidates walked down to the compound to await the announcement.

As the Prime Minister was about to walk down the steps, DMIP president V. Govindaraj stepped out of the throng and garlanded Dr Mahathir and the two other Barisan Nasional candidates.

At the foot of the steps, a man on crutches went up to Dr Mahathir and shook his hand, assuring him that he would pray for his victory.

The man, Encik Osman Mohamed, is an "anak Kubang Pasu" who is staying in Malacca. He has made the special trip to Jitra every general election ever since Dr Mahathir moved to Kubang Pasu.

At 12.45pm, District Officer Haji Ismail Shafie announced the six men as the candidates for the three parliamentary and State constituencies.

Barisan Nasional supporters clapped and Pas supporters shouted "Allahu Akbar" three times.

The candidates and their supporters moved out of the compound at 12.50pm and the excitement at the District Office ended.