

Positive response to personal appeal

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ALOR STAR, Fri — "I hope you'll help me retain Kubang Pasu for the Barisan Nasional once again," Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad told party workers in his constituency yesterday.

It was a personal appeal which received shouts of "don't you worry, doktor" from Barisan Nasional party workers in Kubang Pasu who gathered in Jitra.

To the many who later patted him on the back assuringly, Dr Mahathir is a personal friend. He was appealing to them as a friend.

"Go and help our friends in the other constituencies, we'll ensure your victory here," said a woman party worker.

With the speech to party workers, he launched his campaign in the constituency where he was returned unopposed in 1974 and was subsequently returned with comfortable majorities in 1978 and 1982.

The Prime Minister later spent about four hours touring his constituency, inspecting the Barisan Nasional campaign bases and chatting with those manning them.

All of them had no prior notice of his arrival — he was accompanied by State candidates in his constituency, Menteri Besar Datuk Paduka Osman Aroff and Haji Hanafi Ramli — but most of the branch leaders of the component parties were around helping to put up posters and painting the billboards.

By

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He joked with them and at some bases commented that "we have to work hard, the other side has already started".

Hugged

Indeed, where most of the Barisan bases — a partitioned-off section of a shop house, a ground floor room of a village house or an untenanted house, a makeshift hut — were still in the process of being equipped, Pasu bases in the constituency were already emblazoned with posters, flags and banners and were already operating for some time.

Dr Mahathir, away from the TV cameras and without his normally ubiquitous aides, is a different personality altogether. He is Dr Mahathir the man. Yesterday, to the party workers and villagers he was Dr Mahathir the candidate.

Bereft of the trappings of power — the *Perdana Menteri* was already removed from the number plate of the car in which he travelled to reveal the number KK2000 — Dr Mahathir was just *doktor*. He was not the Prime Minister.

"*Awat cat penuh seluak,*" he said to an elderly villager wearing paint-stained shirts and trousers at the Padang Sera base.

"*Ah, takkan doktor tak tau. Duk cat dacing tak habih lagi.*"

Many walked up to him to shake his hand. Some hugged him and wrapped their arms round his shoulder.

"They belong to my division. They are my friends. Some are my very close friends," he said when asked about the Cik Gu Ali Yusof who had dragged him into the Napoh base to announce that everything was ready.

Indeed some of them were his friends from the days when he was a hawker at Pekan Rabu.

Arriving at Haji Che Pa's house in Kodiang, Dr Mahathir was warmly greeted by his family. The base was the ground floor of the house.

Three women were busily trying to untangle a string of *dacing* pen-nants. They all laughed when he walked up to them.

"We can't seem to untangle this bunch," said one of the women, a bux-omy lady past middle

age. She is Hajah Bahyah, Haji Che Pa's wife.

"Oh, the ends are not in sight," quipped Dr Mahathir and they all laughed.

The Menteri Besar tried to help them but he gave up after a while to join the Prime Minister who was already seated at a make-shift table and happily drinking tea with the villagers.

Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah, who was on her own visiting the Kubang Pasu womenfolk, was driven by a short while later.

Villages

Hajah Bahyah who saw the car trotted up the road and waved for it to stop.

The car stopped and Hajah Bahyah invited Dr Siti Hasmah to her house. Dr Siti Hasmah seemed to be pleading with her that she could not as she had other villages to visit. But Hajah Bahyah, who was joined by the other women, won.

Dr Siti Hasmah got out of the car and *salam* with the women. While walking down an incline to the house, Hajah Bahyah held on to the Prime Minister's wife, shouting: "Help us in case we trip and fall."

They laughed. The Datin chatted with the other women nearby. There

was more laughter.

At the base in Kampung Hutan Setali, Tun-jang, a villager noticing how tired the Prime Minister looked, scolded Dr Mahathir's personal representative in Kubang Pasu.

"Saad, you shouldn't take *doktor* to so many villages. See how tired he looks. He is staggering already," he said.

Dr Mahathir said: "No, not yet."

Another villager walking beside the Prime Minister said: "*Hempas ni karut lah. Dia kuat bagi dua penggal lagi.*"

The others laughed.

A pasar malam was in progress in front of a shop-house housing the Tanah Merah base.

Dr Mahathir walked though the stalls to reach the base, smiling at the people and shaking their hands.

He stopped at a stall where a man was roasting maize over a charcoal fire.

"*Jagong mai di mana ni*", he asked.

"*Jagong tanam di Kubang Pasu, doktor.*"

"*Bakak tiga, sat lagi saya ambik.*"

The Prime Minister walked off towards the base where he stayed for about 10 minutes before being driven off to his Titi Gajah home about 10 kilometres away.