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Utusan-Quit

JOHAN JAAFFAR QUILTS AS UTUSAN MELAYU GROUP EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

KUALA LUMPUR, July 14 (Bernama) -- Prominent journalist Datuk Johan Jaaffar has resigned as Editor-in-Chief of the Utusan Melayu Group, one of Malaysia's largest newspaper companies.

Johan announced his resignation in a morning meeting here today with senior editorial staff of Utusan Malaysia, the group's flagship newspaper, Bernama understands.

Johan, 44, who was appointed to head the newspaper group in 1992, could not be contacted for comments.

But his secretary when contacted told Bernama that her boss had "gone overseas".

News of Johan's resignation spread within media organisations here around lunch-time and Bernama received many telephone calls especially from journalists wanting to have it confirmed.

It is understood that Johan's announcement at the meeting with his staff was met with "shock and disbelief" as none within the newspaper group had expected it was coming.

The reasons for his resignation were not immediately known but sources close to the Utusan Group said he submitted his resignation letter to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad earlier in the day.

The Utusan Group is owned largely by Umno and Dr Mahathir is Umno president.

Some Utusan journalists when contacted quoted Johan as saying at the meeting that it was better for him to quit now "to prevent his presence from impeding the progress of the group's newspapers and publications".

" It is very hard of us to accept his resignation because he has built up Utusan into the most influential newspaper group in the country," said a senior journalist who spoke on condition of anonymity.

" We hope that his resignation will not be accepted," the journalist added.

Meanwhile, AFP reported late this evening that Johan's resignation was due to a "conflict with the leadership of the ruling party" (Umno).

" It is better for him to resign before he is asked to leave," the news agency quoted an Umno member close to the party leadership as saying.

--BERNAMA

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