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Osman (News Focus)

DR MAHATHIR MUST WIN KUBANG PASU TO REALISE VISION- OSMAN AROFF

By: Abdul Halim Taib

ALOR SETAR, Nov 21 (Bernama) -- All types of stories are making the round in the Kubang Pasu Parliamentary constituency where the incumbent is none other than Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The stories have a common theme -- the failure to choose former Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff, the incumbent in the Jitra state constituency, for re-election in this General Election.

According to local political pundits, Osman, who is also Kubang Pasu Umno Division Deputy Chief, has wide influence up to party grassroot level.

The pundits say that Osman's absence in the race will to some extent affect votes for the Prime Minister and there is some indication that votes for the other BN candidates contesting the states will also be in jeopardy if Osman does not hit the BN campaign trail soon.

The talk is also that voters, particularly die-hard supporters of Osman, are not very comfortable with the presence of a new candidate, Prof Dr Othman Ishak, who has taken over from Osman and he is also said to have joined Umno only recently.

Many of the misgivings expressed were put to rest when the two men, Osman and Othman were present at an election briefing which the Prime Minister who is the Kubang Pasu Umno division head also graced.

Speaking at the function, Osman who has been Jitra MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly) for 30 years said, "I am not important but what is more important is continuation of the party's struggle by ensuring victory for Dr Mahathir so that he can realise the vision and build this country."

Osman said that under the present circumstances Kubang Pasu has received world attention because it is the Prime Minister's seat and "all kinds of speculation are being made to break up Umno and cause confusion among its members."

"No matter who is the candidate, so long as he is from the BN, all BN party members must support," he said.

Osman said he had been appointed "Director of Election Action" for Kubang Pasu and "Representative of the Candidate", Dr Mahathir, and with the burden of this task he had to focus on this job and work hard.

"I am an Umno man and not just a mere member. Being an Umno man means upholding the Umno struggle until death."

Meanwhile Prof Othman said, "No doubt I am a new man in politics but my experience in the academic realm will help me solve people's problems."

Prof Othman is a Kubang Pasu boy, having been born in Kampung Natoi, Hosba, and growing up in Jitra.

He became a member of the Jitra Umno branch in 1972.

He had his early education at the Mahmood College in Alor Star and graduated in Islamic Jurisprudence from Cairo's Al-Azhar University.

Throwing some light over Osman's dropping, Dr Mahathir said that Osman was dropped as he being the former Menteri Besar found it inappropriate to continue remaining a backbencher in the state assembly.

Dr Mahathir also said that he had told Osman to be active in other fields.

"The most difficult time for me is to determine the candidates and this is the thing I most dislike to do," the Prime Minister said.

He said that during every election there were bound to be new faces coming in and so old faces had to be removed and in the process many would feel disappointed.

"Some came to me crying but then the decision has been made."

"If five people want to contest a seat, surely four people will have to cry and this cannot be avoided."

The Prime Minister was always in the company of Osman when campaigning in Kubang Pasu yesterday.

Meanwhile, Kubang Pasu Umno Division Youth head Mohamed Radzi Ayob said the Youth movement would redouble its efforts to ensure victory for the Prime Minister in the Kubang Pasu Parliamentary constituency and for the BN candidates for the two state constituencies within it.

"For the Youth, the struggle must continue, even though leaders come and go," he added.

-- BERNAMA

HT MFJ AAM