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`Wan Azizah is welcome to challenge me in Kubang Pasu'

PAPAR, Fri. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said he is prepared to face a challenge from Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail in his Kubang Pasu constituency in the coming general election.

In his first public comments on reports that the wife of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim intends to contest against him, the Prime Minister said in a democratic country like Malaysia, people were free to contest anywhere they wish.

"Dr Wan Azizah is free to challenge me," he said when addressing a meet-the-people session here.

The gathering was organised in support of the Barisan Nasional candidates in the Papar area. They are Datuk Osu Sukam (Kawang), Datuk Abdul Rahim Ismail (Pantai Manis) and Datuk Karim Bujang (Bongawan).

Also present were Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and BN secretary-general Datuk Mohamed Rahmat.

Dr Wan Azizah, who is chairman of Social Justice Movement (Adil), expressed her intention to contest in Kubang Pasu during a visit to the constituency last month.

Pas president, Datuk Fadzil Noor, was reported to have said that his party would not field a candidate in Kubang Pasu and instead support Dr Wan Azizah should she decide to contest there.

Citing the setting up of the Universiti Utara Malaysia in Kubang Pasu as one of the major development projects in the area, the Prime Minister doubted if Dr Wan Azizah had the capability to bring development there.

Built at a cost of RM400 million, the UUM, said Dr Mahathir, was dwarfed by the Universiti Malaysia Sabah which is estimated to cost RM1.2 billion.

"If Dr Wan Azizah could bring in RM800 million for expanding the UUM (to make it on par with the UMS), I will ask the voters in Kubang Pasu to vote for her," he said.

Dr Mahathir had earlier performed Friday prayers with local residents at the Pengalat Kecil Mosque here.

After prayers, the Prime Minister and Dr Siti Hasmah had lunch at the house of Papar Umno division vice head Ghulam Haidarkhan hosted by Osu.

(END)