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`Mahathir's son' label a heavy burden yet a privilege

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FOR a man who is in the news and subject of intense speculation in the last couple of days, Datuk Mokhzani Mahathir was cool and collected when the New Sunday Times caught up with him for an interview yesterday.

Quite the regular guy, albeit one who has just sold his entire corporate interests, he was in a grey T-shirt and black jeans, and was at ease throughout the hour-long session at his home in Bangsar.

His wife Mastisa Mohamed, 31, and their son Mahathir, one-and-a-half years, stayed by his side throughout the interview.

Their two daughters, Marisa Hasmah, four-and-a-half, and Masira Yasmin, three-and-a-half, were asleep.

The children had just returned from welcoming home their grandfather - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad - who touched down yesterday morning from a working visit to Dubai.

"I would have gone to see my father as well but I had to wait for you!" Mokhzani says.

He answered all questions without hesitation, from his childhood days in Alor Star where he was born, to his business ventures and political involvement.

Mokhzani, 40, has lived all his life as "Mahathir's son", a label which he says is a heavy burden yet a privilege.

He has carved out a role for himself in the business world but admits that in the public's eye, it's near impossible to escape his father's shadow.

The move to sell his corporate stake - 12.6 per cent in Tongkah Holdings Bhd and 32.9 per cent in Pantai Holdings Bhd - to quash rumours once and for all, says as much.

While he carries `Mahathir' as part of his name, Mokhzani says he is really a guy-next-door, although he has occasionally come across as aloof, perhaps as a defence mechanism against opportunists.

Among his six brothers and sisters, he is the only one who has joined active politics - he is Umno Youth's assistant treasurer.