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Dr Mahathir reveals his lighter side

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JITRA, Fri. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today revealed a lighter side to his usually formal self when he related humorous experiences of being the Kubang Pasu Member of Parliament.

Speaking at a gathering with civil servants here, Dr Mahathir said one of the toughest aspects of his job was having to cope with the many demands made upon him by his constituents.

Dr Mahathir apologised for his inability to meet every request for assistance, as there were just too many to cope with.

Then, in his usual dry wit, the Prime Minister poked fun at the occasional angry responses he received from disgruntled constituents.

"Some of them tell me 'what's the use of you being Prime Minister if I can get more (assistance) from Ministers, as they give me more'.

"Well, maybe what the Ministers gave to him is not much, but to me it is. If I start lavishing assistance to such an extent, I would not be Prime Minister for long!"

Dr Mahathir said he would always return to Kubang Pasu to find many "envelopes" containing requests for his attention and help.

"I try to help as much as I can, but to those who do not receive help, please don't get angry with me, to the extent that you want to join an Opposition party.

"After all, if they join the Opposition they would still not be able to get the assistance they require, so what's the point?"

Dr Mahathir said although Kubang Pasu was undergoing development, it was not because he was the Prime Minister.

He said some areas in Selangor were developing at a much faster pace compared to Kubang Pasu, but it was not a source of jealousy because all development was the pride of all Malaysians.

There were, however, those who came to Kubang Pasu with the intention of causing his downfall, added Dr Mahathir.

"I have been elected as Member of Parliament many times, sometimes my majority goes down, while it goes up at other times, that's normal," he said.

Alluding to the next general election, which is scheduled to be held in 2004, Dr Mahathir said:

"If I contest this constituency again, I am certain of obtaining secure support, but if it is not me, then the BN will retain the seat.

"I am getting on with age. If you have been observing me, you will notice how I am getting tired from all this standing up," he said, referring to his speech, which at that point was already reaching the 60-minute mark.

"One day I will have to go, I am just a mortal, but if you want to give support, don't do it because of me, but because you support the Barisan Nasional party, without which I am unable to do anything," he said to the applause of the audience, who have a unique perspective of having Dr Mahathir as both the top Government official and their Member of Parliament as well.

Dr Mahathir later took time off to visit a friend's ailing father at the Alor Star Hospital.

The Prime Minister visited Hussain Talib, 82, who is the father of former Kubang Pasu Umno executive secretary Saad Hussain.

Dr Mahathir is also the Kubang Pasu Umno division chief.

Hussain, who is diagnosed with having rectal cancer, was admitted to the hospital for treatment two days ago.

The Prime Minister spent 20 minutes with Hussain and advised him to eat regularly, stay away from spicy foods and to follow doctor's instructions.  
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