

Division chief dismisses claim of money politics

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KUALA LUMPUR: Kubang Pasu Umno division chief Datuk Mohd Johari Baharum brushed aside allegations that money politics had reared its ugly head at the division.

In denying Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's claims, he said as far as he knew, the divisional elections were conducted fairly without any improper practices.

"I don't know where he (Dr Mahathir) got the notion that delegates were bribed not to vote for him. As far as I know, no such thing had happened," he said yesterday.

Johari, who is also the Deputy Internal Security Minister, said this is the first time the division had been plagued by accusations that money was used to influence the outcome of the elections.

He said Dr Mahathir's allegations were incorrect, adding that he had not received any complaints from members on such malpractice.

"It is just propaganda by his supporters. Some parties are making this into an issue. As far as I'm concerned, everything is over. Even Tun himself had said he accepted the decision," he said.

On Dr Mahathir's claim that a "preferred list" was circulated among delegates, Johari said such lists were normal during party elections.

"In fact, such lists are not only confined within Umno, but were common at other (Barisan Nasional) parties," he said.

He added until today, he was still loyal to Dr Mahathir and was grateful for the former prime minister's contributions to the party.

When contacted by *Berita Harian* later, Johari said that several unknown companies or individuals could have met with the delegates to campaign on behalf of Dr Mahathir, whom, he added, was the "flesh and blood" of Kubang Pasu.

He added that campaigning for Dr Mahathir was also done through *Putra Post*, *Era Baru* and a VCD containing his speeches was distributed to the delegates.

Johari denied allegations that the supreme council had instructed that Dr Mahathir be prevented from contesting.

Meanwhile, Umno Youth chief Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein said if the divisional members were influenced by the list, then Dr Mahathir's son, Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, would not have been elected as one of the G7, the seven delegates to attend the Umno general assembly.

"However, Mukhriz was elected and this showed that delegates' choices were not influenced by the list," he said.

He said there were proper channels within Umno, such as the disciplinary committee, to investigate allegations of money politics.

He said although the division members had made their decision, that did not mean he was happy over Dr Mahathir's loss.

"He was prime minister for 22 years and today, he lost at the G7 level. Of course, I'm unhappy. However, if he wins, I don't think it would be conducive for Umno's strength. So, in a way, I'm relieved," he said, and called on members to look forward to the future.