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GENERAL ELECTION

'I DARE DR M TO CONTEST IN PEKAN'

Barisan ready to fight for and help Najib retain seat, says Hisham

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TUN Dr Mahathir Mohamad was merely making a populist statement regarding his openness to contest in Pekan for the 14th General Election.

The above is a summation by Umno vice-president Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein in dismissing the statement by the Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia chairman.

"I regard it as a populist state-

ment. If Tun M (Dr Mahathir) is brave, then contest in Pekan. I challenge him," said Hishammuddin.

He was speaking at a press conference after officiating the Cameron Highlands Umno division delegates' meeting in Sungai Koyan here yesterday.

Two days ago, during a Hari Raya Aidilfitri open house hosted by DAP member Datuk Zaid Ibrahim, former prime minister Dr Mahathir said he was open to contesting the Pekan parliamentary seat in the upcoming polls.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is the current Pekan member of parliament.

Hishammuddin reminded Dr Mahathir that he, acting Umno deputy president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi and all members of Barisan Nasional were ready to fight for and help Najib retain the seat.

He noted that the statement was particularly striking as it came at a time when many Umno members were attending the various party division delegates' meetings.

On PKR vice-president Mohd Rafizi Ramli's recent claim that Pakatan Harapan enjoyed enough support from the Malays to defeat BN in GE14, Hishammuddin described it as mere assumption.

"Rafizi makes all sorts of statements. When we (BN) answer, he shifts the goal post. These issues have been clearly (answered) previously.

"He is merely throwing (allegations) to see which one gains



Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein

traction," he said.

He was responding to Rafizi's claim made at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur on July 20.

Hishammuddin pointed out that what Rafizi claimed was baseless and not new in light of the upcoming polls.

"I do not regard it seriously. On what facts does he base his statement?"

"I myself can say that nobody supports Rafizi's party (PKR) or that everyone rejects him," said Hishammuddin.

Present at the meeting were Cameron Highlands Umno division chief Datuk Seri Wan Rosdy Wan Ismail and Datuk Seri Shahiruddin Ab Moin, representing the Pahang Umno li-

aison committee.

In **Johor Baru**, at the Gelang Patah Umno division delegates' meeting here yesterday, Hishammuddin said he strongly believed that BN could wrest back the Gelang Patah parliamentary seat from DAP if members stayed true to Johor's spirit of *muafakat* (consensus).

The Umno vice-president said although BN lost the seat to the opposition in the last general election and was dealt with another blow when Umno division permanent chairman Datuk Baharom Abdul Ghani resigned from the party last year, party members must remain steadfast.

"I believe we can win back Gelang Patah if every branch and division leader, including BN component party members, work together for one true cause, which is fighting for a better future in Gelang Patah."

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