

Dr M's presence drives Mukhriz-for-Kedah MB speculation
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By Md Izwan

ALOR STAR, April 20 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's presence beside Ayer Hitam hopeful Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir today strengthened talk that his son will be Kedah menteri besar should the Barisan Nasional (BN) win back the PAS-run northern state in the May 5 polls.

The still-influential former prime minister and his wife, Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, were seen accompanying their son Mukhriz to submit his nomination papers at the Kubang Pasu science school here today.

"I will campaign not only for my son, but for the whole party.

"Even though there are Umno leaders who are enemies with me, I will still campaign for him," Dr Mahathir told reporters.

The 87-year-old Umno veteran predicted that Kedah BN would trigger a surprise upset in the state election, saying that his politician son had a bright future.

But he was coy when asked about Mukhriz's chance to be menteri besar should BN win in the state.

"That, don't know-lah. That's Najib's problem, I only follow what he says," the country's longest-serving prime minister said.

Mukhriz will face PAS incumbent Abdul Ghani Ahmad in a straight fight for the Ayer Hitam state seat in Election 2013.

The interim international trade and industry deputy minister had shifted from his Jerlun parliamentary seat to the Ayer Hitam seat within the Jerlun constituency.

BN candidate Datuk Othman Aziz will now contest the Jerlun federal seat against Datuk Dr Ismail Salleh from PAS.

The Kota Siputeh state seat in Jerlun will see a straight fight between BN's Datuk Abu Hasan Sharif and PAS's Ismail Wan Teh.

After the candidates were announced, Mukhriz shed tears as he hugged his parents.

Othman lost the Ayer Hitam seat in Election 2008 to Abdul Ghani by just 506 votes.

With the race for the menteri besar's post heating up, Mukhriz appears to be getting more media attention than Kedah BN chairman Datuk Ahmad Bashah.

Kedah fell to the loose opposition pact of PAS, PKR and the DAP in Election 2008 that later formed Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

PAS currently controls 16 state seats in Kedah, followed by BN with 14 seats, PKR three and DAP one, as well as two independent representatives that used to be from PKR.

PAS also won six of the 15 federal seats in Kedah in Election 2008 while PKR won five and

BN four.

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