

Dr M praises Che Johan, ready to defend 'hero' against Umno
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PASIR MAS, April 28 — Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad praised Barisan Nasional's (BN) Che Johan Che Pa today, after the Pasir Mas candidate refused to contest in order to give way to Datuk Ibrahim Ali.

The former BN chairman hailed Che Johan's action on Nomination Day as a sacrifice for the good of the coalition, which left independent candidate Ibrahim free to fight PAS' Nik Abduh Nik Abdul Aziz in a straight fight.

"In any struggle, sacrifice is necessary ... Not only has Che Johan sacrificed himself, now he is being tortured instead," said Dr Mahathir here, referring to the impending disciplinary action by Umno against Che Johan.

"This is unfair ... If the disciplinary board wishes to prosecute him, then I will be his defence lawyer."

Dr Mahathir was received by close to a thousand supporters, mostly made up of older citizens, who braved the glaring noon sun at Che Johan's house.

Che Johan was once again given a hero's salute, as the crowd chanted "Johan wira" (Johan the hero) among other chants like "Kelantan tukar" (Change Kelantan) and "Bunga raya" (Hibiscus) which refers to Ibrahim's logo in the polls.

The Pasir Mas Umno division deputy chief claimed that his refusal to contest was spurred by Dr Mahathir's insistence that BN field Ibrahim for Election 2013.

"I considered Tun's advice, so I withdrew just to keep our beloved Tun's dignity and integrity intact.

"If we were to have a three-cornered fight, surely we would lose. God-willing, the hibiscus will bloom, bound to the fair scale," he said, referring to both Ibrahim and BN's logos.

Local Umno leaders made their appearance at the rally meant to bolster support for Ibrahim, who had since formed an allegiance with Pasir Mas Umno's election machinery on Thursday.

Faces present included Pasir Mas Umno division chief Datuk Hanafi Mamat, division vice-chief Abdul Aziz Mohammad, Kelantan BN election director Datuk Hassan Harun, and local community leader and Kelantan royal family member Tengku Iskandar.

Booklets containing Ibrahim's achievements as a Malay rights' fighter and highlighting his good relationship with the local Chinese community were distributed to the crowd here. The song "Bo la wei" (Enough is Enough) by Malay singer Eddie Hamid, which contains lyrics that call for change in Kelantan, were played several times before Dr Mahathir's arrival.

Ibrahim, who has called himself an apprentice of Perkasa patron Dr Mahathir, had in the last few days pledged improvements to the area's infrastructure that he claimed had been neglected under PAS rule.

Just last night, Dr Mahathir came to the defence of the BN stronghold in Putrajaya, telling PAS and its candidate Datuk Husam Musa last night to fix Kelantan's problems before focusing on the country's administrative capital.

Dr Mahathir will go on a walkabout this afternoon, with another rally planned in Bunut Susu here, which falls under the Tendong state seat contested by Pasir Mas Umno division chief Datuk Hanafi Mamat.

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