

## **Riding the Mahathir wave in Kubang Pasu**

**FREE MALAYSIA TODAY**

**March 15, 2018**

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ALOR SETAR: Kubang Pasu is set to be the centre of attention this coming polls if PPBM decides to launch a strike against Umno by fielding none other than the constituency's favourite son, Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

While the party's candidate has yet to be finalised, the PPBM chairman's name is, unsurprisingly, among those shortlisted.

Kubang Pasu PPBM division chief Mohd Hairy Md Saad said this was because the 93-year-old was a former MP of the area and still much loved by the community.

"The community here loves him very much. He has brought so much development to the district, turning it into an education hub. Many educational institutes were set up, such as Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), Politeknik Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah (Polimas), the Industrial Training Institute, and teaching institutes, among others.

"As a result, Kubang Pasu produced many educators and knowledgeable people," he told FMT.

The birth of these educational institutes also created many job opportunities for those living in Kubang Pasu, he said, adding that this was especially so in the area of Changlun, where UUM was set up.

“Various job openings were created, from lecturers to janitors,” Hairy said.

He added that sentiment towards Mahathir was still favourable, even after the former prime minister left Umno and formed his own party which is now part of the Pakatan Harapan (PH) opposition pact.

“It is not just Kubang Pasu folk and PPBM supporters who still love Mahathir. Those from Umno still do as well.

“We were formerly from Umno, and we are still friends with those in Umno. When we talk to them, they told us, if Tun (Mahathir) contests, they will support him.

“They are well aware of Tun’s contributions and sacrifices in Kubang Pasu.”

Such is Umno’s dominance in Kubang Pasu that the constituency has only had two MPs since it was created in 1974 – Mahathir and his replacement, Mohd Johari Baharum.

Mahathir, a Kedah native, held the Kubang Pasu seat, which has over 65,000 registered voters, for seven terms until 2004.

He was the prime minister from 1981 to 2003.

In the subsequent elections of 2004, 2008 and 2013, the seat, which has a racial composition of 86% Malay, 9% Chinese and 4% Indians, was contested and won by current Deputy Defence Minister Johari with healthy majorities.

In the 13th general election (GE13), he defeated PAS' Mohd Jamal Nasir by 10,444 votes.

Hairy, however, said despite having held the seat for three terms, Johari had not brought many changes to Kubang Pasu.

He said at present, the people of Kubang Pasu found it hard to secure jobs due to a lack of opportunities.

“Those who still support Umno are those who still hold positions in the party and have interest in the party.

“Also, we see today a majority of Umno branches in Kubang Pasu have failed to hold their meetings due to a lack of quorum.”

In spite of the challenges ahead, Hairy said PPBM stood a good chance of winning in Kubang Pasu as its members had put in a lot of work.

He said they had successfully set up election machineries in all 44 voting district centres (PDM) in Kubang Pasu.

Previously, he said, opposition parties such as PKR and Amanah had found it hard to set up machineries in the PDM.

“But we in PPBM have received help and support from the community to set up our election machineries in all 44 PDM.

“We are confident that the Kubang Pasu constituents are supportive of PPBM. We also see Umno members now supporting us. They have lost their faith in Umno, especially in Kubang Pasu, and they are now giving us cooperation and support to set up the machineries.

“I very much believe that the sentiment of the Kubang Pasu community is favourable to us, and that they fully support Mahathir.”

On the issues faced by the people in Kubang Pasu, Hairy said the main concerns were the rising cost of living, a lack of development and flooding.

“There are unfulfilled promises. For instance, the current MP promised the Malay community 15 years ago that Barisan Nasional (BN) would help build a new mosque to replace the current mosque in Changlun, which is in bad shape.

“But it has been 15 years. Umno is now bringing up that same promise again, should they be given the mandate.

“Should the community still believe in Umno? Opportunities have been given to them time and again, but the promises remain unfulfilled.”

The Kubang Pasu parliamentary constituency, located to the north of Kedah, borders the state of Perlis as well as neighbouring Thailand.

In 1841, Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin handed Kubang Pasu over to Tunku Anum Tunku Abdul Rahman after the latter successfully freed Kedah from the clutches of Siamese rule during the Siam-Kedah war.

Tunku Anum was given the power to rule Kubang Pasu, and he named it “Kubang Pasu Darul Qiyam”, which means a state standing on its own. Its capital then was located in Pulau Pisang.

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