

Division chief pleads with Dr M to reconsider

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JITRA: More than 90 per cent of the committee members in the Kubang Pasu Umno division yesterday made an impassioned plea to Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad to withdraw from contesting as a delegate to the party's general assembly in November.

Led by division chairman Datuk Johari Baharum, they said it was not proper for the former Prime Minister, who was also their chairman for some 30 years before he retired in 2003, to be seated among the delegates at the assembly.

Speaking on behalf of the committee members and representing about 90 per cent of the 138 Umno branches in the division, Johari, who is also MP for Kubang Pasu, said: "Tun's (Dr Mahathir) intention is not proper and unprecedented.

"This is the feeling and opinion of the majority of Kubang Pasu Umno members.

"Most of us have been and are still with Tun and we wish to see him at the assembly and observe the debates but we feel it is not proper for him to be seated with the delegates from Kubang Pasu.

"For some 30 years he was our division chief and we respect and are loyal to him and appreciate all his contributions to the division, people and nation.

"But, we don't think he deserves to be seated among the delegates at the assembly," he told a Press conference.

Johari, who is also Deputy Internal Security Minister, made the plea before 40 senior members of the division, including its Wanita, Youth and Puteri chiefs.

Present were Johari's deputy, Ahmad Zaini Japar, division vice-chairman Aman Khan Md Hussein and secretary Samsuddin Ahmad.

Missing were two of the division's committee members, Prof Datuk Dr Othman Ishak and Datuk Mukhriz Mahathir, who is Dr Mahathir's son.

On a personal level, Johari, said he was sad at Dr Mahathir's accusation that he had prevented him from contesting.

"I put him very high up the pedestal. I am very loyal to him and will always be.

"In fact, when I won in the last general election, Tun (Dr Mahathir) was the first person I met for advice and it was not Pak Lah (Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi)," he said with tears running down his cheeks.

He stressed that neither he nor any of the division's committee members had taken covert actions to prevent Dr Mahathir from contesting.

"We know it is his right to contest but we are appealing to him to reconsider his decision.

"We have been with Tun through thick and thin and we have the highest respect for him.

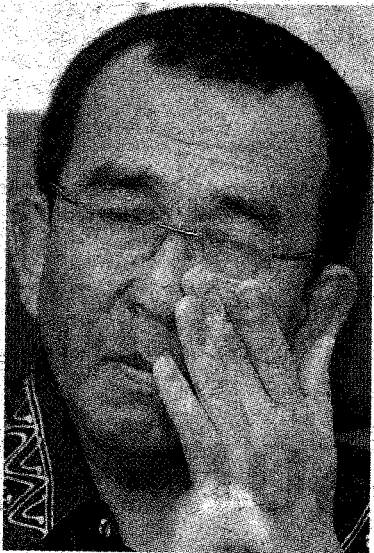
"Now, we plead with him not to contest and we do so not to demean him but because it is just not proper for a former Prime Minister to do so," he said during the 20-minute Press conference.

To a question, he said the division would make a representation to convey its decision to Dr Mahathir.

The division has received 17 nominations to contest for the seven delegates posts.

Dr Mahathir has received 15 nominations while Mukhriz has 50.

A total of 493 delegates will attend the divisional meeting, to be opened by Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid, at Dewan Wawasan here at 9am tomorrow.



Johari says he has always been loyal to Tun Mahathir