

Excellent victory in Batu Talam, says PM

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has described The Barisan Nasional's success in the Batu Talam by-election as an excellent victory.

The Prime Minister, in congratulating BN candidate Syed Ali Syed Mohamad and the BN election machinery for the success, said it showed that more people were supporting the Government now and (more people) also understood its policies and objectives.

Dr Mahathir was speaking to reporters at the RMAF Sungai Besi Station before leaving for Kuching to attend the National Day celebration tomorrow.

The BN retained the Batu Talam State seat on Saturday when Syed Ali defeated Pas candidate Tengku Puji Tengku Abdul Hamid with a majority of 2,990 votes. Syed Ali, 51, polled 5,355 votes while Tengku Puji, 50, got 2,365 votes in his third attempt to wrest the Batu Talam seat from BN.

Asked to comment on reports that Pas supporters were aggressive during campaigns for the by-election, Dr Mahathir said it was normal for Pas to adopt such an attitude. This was especially so when the party felt it was going to lose in the election, he added.

He said Pas had used similar tactics during a by-election in Kedah last year. The party brought "gangsters" from outside the State.

"In the Batu Talam by-election, Pas brought these people from Kelantan, I believe they are not from Pahang," he added.

On Friday night, Pahang State Executive Councillor Omar Othman and 15 others, who were on their way to an Orang Asli cultural show, were surrounded by about 50 people.

In the incident, Omar and his group were prevented from entering the village by the youths, believed to be Pas supporters.

Asked about the tactics by Pas to use Vision 2020 to influence Felda settlers, Dr Mahathir said: "They can use Vision 2020 as the material but it will be useless. This is because many people know what Vision 2020 and its objectives are."

He said the Government knew that Pas had tried to use Vision 2020 by criticising it. But it had failed.

Dr Mahathir said the Government on its part would continue to provide information to the people, including those in Felda schemes.