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Mahathir-Kelantan

KELANTAN BY-ELECTION NOT A GAUGE OF PARTIES' STRENGTH, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Dec 9 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed said today the Pulai Chondong state by-election to be held in Kelantan need not necessarily reflect the actual strength of Umno and PAS.

Dr Mahathir said this when asked whether the by-election result would be a good indication of the strength of PAS and Umno in Kelantan following the dissolution of Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) and the joining of Umno by S46 members.

"It need not be so. We always like to make certain interpretations on something...if it happens it is because of local situations, we do not know yet," he said.

Umno, PAS and S46 had their own strongholds in Kelantan, he told reporters at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang, near here, on his return from official visits to the Netherlands and Saudi Arabia.

The Election Commission has fixed Dec 26 as nomination day and Jan 6 for polling for the by-election, which was caused by the death of the assemblyman, Kapten (R) Mohamad Noor Ahmad, on Dec 4.

In the general election last year, Mohamad Noor won the seat on a S46 ticket but he joined Umno last October after S46 was dissolved.

Dr Mahathir confirmed that the resignation of three Umno members from the Kelantan Exco was in keeping with a party directive.

The three, including Deputy Menteri Besar Datuk Rozali Isohak, were former members of S46 which had cooperated with PAS in the last two general elections.

Asked whether their resignations would pave the way for the formation of a coalition government between Barisan Nasional and PAS in Kelantan, Dr Mahathir said this would not be easy to achieve.

"We need to know what the conditions are because such a coalition is not as easy as it is thought," said Dr Mahathir, who is Umno president and Kelantan Umno chief.

Drawing an analogy with a marriage, Dr Mahathir said understanding was necessary for the formation of a coalition government.

"But it should not be a marriage of convenience that is to take place only when problems crop up," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was looking for a suitable time to visit Kelantan.

-- BERNAMA

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