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PM: It's up to Kelantan people (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the result of the Pulai Chondong by-election showed that the people of Kelantan preferred Pas, even if it was at the expense of development and smooth government administration.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, said the coalition did not want to make excuses for its defeat.

"I am not looking for reasons because excuses are not important. In fact the people of Kelantan are in favour of Pas and there is nothing we can do about it," he told reporters after visiting the Mines Resort City project in Sungai Besi.

The Prime Minister was asked to comment on BN's defeat in the by-election which was won by Pas candidate Zulkifli Mamat. He defeated BN's Yusoff Hamzah by 118 votes.

Zulkifli polled 4,778 votes while Yusoff obtained 4,660 votes. There were 80 spoilt votes.

Asked whether the outcome of the by-election indicated that the people of Kelantan were unhappy with the entry of former Parti Melayu Semangat 46 members into Umno, Dr Mahathir said:

"Maybe yes, but only in Kelantan. But in other places, they are in favour. If the people of Kelantan want to isolate themselves or to sulk, what can we do?"

"If Umno is powerful (in Kelantan) we would have won. There is no more S46, what we have now is only Umno. Even without S46, Umno would have lost."

Dr Mahathir said although Pas had won by a slim majority, the fact was that the party had won and this showed that the people of Kelantan did not care about development or administration. He said if the people of Pulai Chondong wanted a Pas representative, there was nothing that the BN could do.

"We have no excuses. What has happened to us can also happen to Pas. If Pas supporters are willing to come out (to vote) and Umno supporters are not, we will lose," he said.

State Barisan Nasional chairman Datuk Annuar Musa said last night that the failure of Umno voters living outside the constituency to vote had contributed to BN's defeat.

He said of the 1,300 or so Umno voters living outside the constituency, some 700 did not return to vote.

Dr Mahathir, when asked whether the defeat was due to the fact that the father of the BN candidate was a Pas member, said: "We have many candidates who are sons of Pas members but (we) won in other places."

Asked whether BN's defeat was due to its own weakness or mistake, Dr Mahathir said he did not know what caused the failure.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, when asked to comment, said BN's performance was not that bad as Pas had only won by a small majority.

Asked if he felt that the defeat was caused by lack of co-operation among BN component parties and the absence of their leaders during the campaign period, Anwar said as Pulai Chondong was a Malay dominated constituency, the presence of other component party leaders was not necessary.

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