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Mahathir-Pulai Chondong

THE PEOPLE OF KELANTAN WANT PAS, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 7 (Bernama) -- PAS' victory in Pulai Chondong shows that the people of Kelantan want PAS without caring about development or good administration, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"I am not looking for reasons because excuses are not important. In fact the people of Kelantan like PAS and there is nothing we can do about it.

"If the people of Kelantan want to isolate themselves or to sulk, what can we do," he told reporters after visiting the Mines Resort City project in Sungai Besi, near here.

The prime minister was commenting on the defeat of the Barisan Nasional candidate, Yusoff Hamzah, to PAS' Zulkefli Mamat by a 118-vote majority in the state by-election yesterday.

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 BN had no excuse for the defeat because if Umno claimed to be strong in Kelantan, surely the BN would have won.

Asked whether the defeat was due to the fact that the people of Kelantan disapproved of the former Parti Melayu Semangat 46 members joining Umno, Dr Mahathir said: "Maybe, but this is in Kelantan only. In other places the people approve".

On the possibility of the defeat being due to the fact that the father of the BN candidate was a PAS member, he said: "We have many candidates who are sons of PAS members but (we) win in other places."

Dr Mahathir said he did not know what had caused the BN's defeat when the party's election machinery, including the operations rooms, was running well.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim denied that the BN's defeat was due to the lack of support from the top BN and Umno leaders or from the BN component parties because the seat was in a Malay constituency.

He saw many state representatives and ministers there yesterday but coincidentally many (Umno leaders) were on leave and did not turn up, he said when asked for his comment after opening the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka annual assembly here.

The BN's performance was improving and the majority obtained by the opposition was slim, he said.

Meanwhile, Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said said the slim majority showed that the voters were beginning to give their support to the BN.

The most important thing for Umno now was to further improve the efficiency of its machinery in Kelantan because there were indications that the tide was on its side, he told reporters after opening the Asean Tourism Conference (ATC) held in conjunction with the Asean Tourism Forum (ATF), here.

Asked whether it was likely that voters who are former S46 members did not give their support to the BN because their applications to join Umno had been rejected, Sabbaruddin said: "we should not blame others when defeated but it is important that we conduct a study why it happened."

Sabbaruddin said that all S46 members would be accepted into Umno when all the application process had been completed. At present, many of their

applications have not been approved due to technical problems.

Sabbaruddin said the by-election should not be used to gauge Umno's influence in Kelantan.

The by-election was held merely because the seat was left vacant following the death of the incumbent state assemblyman, he added.

Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed thanked BN supporters at Pulai Chondong because the coalition obtained a larger number of votes although it lost in the by-election.

"We worked very hard, really hard...our machinery performed well with the support of various parties, whether they are from Umno, former S46 members and those from outside Pulai Chondong," he told reporters after meeting participants of a marketing programme here.

"The people have made their choice...we congratulate the successful candidate because our country is democratic and democracy is thriving," he said.

-- BERNAMA

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