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Sabbaruddin - By-election

DEFEAT IN ARAU UNEXPECTED, SAYS SABBARUDDIN

KUALA LUMPUR, July 5 (Bernama) -- Umno secretary-general Datuk Sabbaruddin Chik said the Barisan Nasional's (BN) defeat in yesterday's Arau parliamentary by-election in Perlis was "unexpected and not anticipated".

"We've lost, what can we do... many did not expect it," he said.

Sabbaruddin was approached by reporters here today during the launch of the annual floral float competition, Pesta Flora '98, for comment on the BN's failure to defend the Arau seat.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad launched the event.

Sabbaruddin, who is also Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister, said Umno would conduct a post-mortem into the defeat.

In the by-election the BN candidate Ismail Kassim lost to PAS' Hashim Jasin by 1,323 votes.

Hashim polled 12,864 votes against Ismail's 11,541 votes.

Sabbaruddin was also asked whether Ismail's defeat had anything to do with the issue of nepotism raised recently by several Umno leaders given that the BN candidate is a younger brother of Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim.

He replied: "We're not sure about that, we have to study. We have to look first at the causes. I can't give the reasons."

"But we obviously have to find out why the defeat since in the last general election the majority we secured was 6,000 to 7,000 votes," said Sabbaruddin.

The by-election was held following the death of the BN Member of Parliament Kamaruddin Ahmad last May 25.

In the 1995 general election, the late Kamaruddin garnered 16,266 votes to defeat Mohd Zain Hamzah of the now-defunct Semangat 46 by a majority of 6,929 votes.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu said the defeat was a warning to the BN and supporters not to view lightly any election.

Samy Vellu, who is also the Works Minister, said the BN should have won the by-election if all supporters had worked hard since Arau was considered a safe seat for the party.

MCA secretary-general Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said the party's headquarters would ask for a full report from the Perlis MCA in connection with the defeat.

Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob said petty squabbles within the party had led to the unexpected defeat.

This was similar to the Teluk Intan parliamentary by-election last year where weakness and splits within the party was the main reason for the BN candidate to lose, said Megat Junid who is also the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister.

Melaka Chief Minister Datuk Seri Abu Zahar Isnin said the BN should implement new approaches in its election machinery in preparing for the next general election.

Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat said the by-election result was a warning for the BN government to be sensitive to the people's plight and took efforts to overcome the problems.

"Defeat of the Umno candidate was not caused by Pas but was self-inflicted...and voiced out by the people of Perlis," he said.

DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang said BN's defeat in the Arau and

Teluk Intan by-elections depicted a changed in political mood within the past three years as compared to the election in 1985.

"Now BN strongholds especially that of Umno could no longer be deemed as safe," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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