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Perlis Umno told to conduct post-mortem on BN's defeat

KANGAR, Sun. - Umno president Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad and his deputy Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim have directed the Perlis Umno liaison committee to conduct a post-mortem on the Barisan Nasional's defeat in the Arau parliamentary by-election yesterday.

The report will be tabled at the supreme council meeting on Thursday.

Perlis Menteri Besar and State Umno chairman Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said Dr Mahathir had instructed him to conduct a post-mortem after the Prime Minister was notified of the defeat last night.

This is the first time in history that Pas had captured a parliamentary seat in Perlis.

In Langkawi, Anwar told reporters that the Government accepted the voters' decision.

Expressing disappointment with the outcome of the by-election, he said the Perlis Umno liaison committee had been asked to conduct a post-mortem and submit a comprehensive report to the supreme council.

Anwar was speaking to reporters after launching the first Malaysian Jet Endurance Grand Prix '98 at Awana Porto Malai.

In the by-election, Pas State Commissioner Hashim Jasin won the seat when he beat BN's Ismail Kassim by a 1,323-vote majority.

Hashim, 59, a religious lecturer, secured 12,864 votes while Ismail, 38, who is Shahidan's younger brother, obtained 11,541 votes.

The by-election was held following the death of 49-year-old Kamaruddin Ahmad from a stroke on May 25.

The former magistrate contested on a BN ticket in the 1995 general election and won by 6,889 votes.

Asked on talks that the BN had fielded an unsuitable candidate for the by-election and there were internal problems in the by-election machinery, Anwar said it would be appropriate to wait for the post-mortem report.

On whether the result was a reflection of the people's reaction to the current economic problem, Anwar said the report would establish why the voters had chosen the opposition candidate.

"For the moment, we are just assuming," he added.

Shahidan, when met by reporters, said internal dissent within the party had contributed to BN's shocking defeat in the by-election.

"I don't understand why we lost in certain Umno strongholds such as Tambun Tulang," Shahidan, who is also Tambun Tulang Assemblyman, said.

"We'll get to the bottom of this," he said.

Although all five State constituencies in Arau are represented by BN, Shahidan said only constituents in Pauh had given solid backing to the coalition.

The Menteri Besar said Pas was more aggressive in wooing voters by manipulating specific issues including the economic problems.

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