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Mahathir-Lunas

BN ACCEPTS DEFEAT IN LUNAS, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight that the Barisan Nasional (BN) accepts the defeat of its candidate in the Lunas state by-election.

"That is Lunas' decision...we accept it," he said when asked to comment on the results of the by-election, won by Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) candidate Saifuddin Nasution Ismail with a majority of 530 votes.

Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman, said that he was disappointed with the BN's defeat and wanted a study to be conducted to find out the reasons for the defeat.

"We will need to have a look later...we do not know the reasons (for the BN's defeat)," he told reporters after performing "tarawikh" prayers with officers and men of the armed forces at the Khalid Ibn Al-Walid Mosque, at the Ministry of Defence, here.

Dr Mahathir said that he had already been informed of the results of the by-election.

He declined to comment further until after the reasons for the BN's defeat have been determined.

Saifuddin, 36, obtained 10,511 votes while BN's S.Anthonysamy, 59, of the MIC obtained 9,981 votes. Another candidate, N.Letchumanan (Independent), 46, obtained 50 votes and lost his deposit.

Meanwhile, MIC president Datuk Seri S.Samy Vellu said that the MIC accepted the decision of the voters in Lunas.

"We will keep on fighting," the Works Minister said, when contacted in Kulim tonight.

Defence Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak, who is an Umno vice-president, said BN accepted the voters' verdict in Lunas although it felt that their future would be better taken care off by a BN representative.

"We will conduct a thorough study to find out what actually happened. We should not point fingers hastily and we should not panic.

"We should put things in perspective that this is a by-election, and history has shown that we had been defeated in by-elections before only to come back with renewed strength," he told reporters after attending the function with the Prime Minister.

Najib hoped that BN would emerge from this defeat with renewed vigour, and he urged all BN component parties to reorganise their machinery at all levels in order to make amends in future.

Asked whether the defeat had given BN any signal, Najib said: "We cannot read national implications into it; this was what happened in the Lunas constituency."

In KULIM, Umno Supreme Council member Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said the BN lost because the people were taken in by the opposition's ploy in playing on racial and religious sentiments.

"Now we (BN) must make sure campaigns like these are not used again. We need to have a proper mechanism in the BN to fight this sort of campaigning," he told reporters.

Indian Progressive Front (IPF) president M.G.Pandithan, when contacted here, said the BN should conduct a "serious post-mortem" on the by-election.

"We really worked hard...we thought we can win with a small majority.

But winning and losing is part and parcel of democracy and, therefore, we accept it," he added.

--BERNAMA

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