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`Voters chose BN because it is still the best'

BARISAN Nasional's victory in the closely-watched Sanggang by-election on Saturday is proof that the Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim factor, which was said to have figured quite a bit in the last general election, has lost its appeal.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday the Sanggang voters chose BN because it is still the best and the cleanest.

"(The BN) has not abused its position nor does it use dirty tactics to win elections."

Opposition parties which rallied behind Pas in the Sanggang by-election were extensively using the issue of former deputy prime minister, who is serving sentence for corruption and in court for charges related to sodomy, to try and discredit the BN and swayed the people to vote for them.

"I think the public is no longer influenced with emotions triggered by matters ... like the accusation (by the Opposition) that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was framed," Dr Mahathir said.

The Prime Minister and BN chairman said the extensive campaigning by the coalition members helped ensure victory over Pas.

When asked, Dr Mahathir said he was happy with the election win.

"I am happy because we got more votes than in the previous general election although 900 voters were taken out of the electoral roll. Of the 900, some may be BN supporters," he said.

Barisan Nasional retained the Sanggang state seat on Saturday night after its candidate Redzwan Harun defeated Datuk Hishamuddin Yahaya of Pas by a 1,963-vote majority. Redzwan secured 6,743 votes while Hishamuddin obtained 4,780 votes.

A total of 11,639 or 76.28 per cent of the 15,276 voters cast their ballots. There were 116 spoilt votes.

In the November 29 general election, Datuk Abdullah Kia defeated Pahang Pas Youth chief Abdul Latif Abdul Rahim by a majority of 1,038 votes. The Sanggang seat fell vacant after Abdullah's death on February 26.

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