

03/04/2000

PM: BN is still the best (HL)

Patvinder Singh

SEPANG, Sun - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Barisan Nasional's win in the Sanggang State by-election shows there is a realisation among voters that the BN is still the best party as it does not abuse its position or use dirty tactics.

He said the BN had carried out an effective campaign while the Opposition used tactics that were "very dirty" by frightening people, especially the Chinese, so that they would not come out to vote.

"Their behaviour was very dirty and we are very saddened by their methods," added Dr Mahathir, who is BN chairman.

The people were also no longer easily stirred up by matters such as the alleged victimisation of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, he said when asked about factors that contributed to the BN's win yesterday.

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after launching and later watching races at the Malaysian Motorcycle Grand Prix at the Sepang International Circuit.

In the by-election, BN's Redzwan Harun defeated Datuk Hishamuddin Yahaya of Pas by a majority of 1,963. Redzwan garnered 6,743 votes while Hishamuddin obtained 4,780 votes.

The by-election was held following the death of 54-year-old Datuk Abdullah Kia from a stroke on Feb 26.

Dr Mahathir said he was happy with the win as the BN's majority had increased from the last general election. The increased majority, he said, was despite 900 voters being removed from the electoral rolls who he said could have been BN supporters.

Dr Mahathir was also asked about perceptions that with the win the BN had succeeded in increasing its support among the people but that the "the battle is on".

"The battle is actually on. Although we won well in the last general election, there was evidence that support for the BN had decreased, especially among the Malays. This was due to the Opposition's incitement," he said.

He said in the Sanggang by-election the BN had the opportunity to provide clarification about the actual situation in the country and this had given confidence to the people to vote for the BN.

"The Opposition's campaign was based on one matter only - hate the BN and vote for us. If we ask (the people) what they got from voting for the Opposition, they would say nothing. Only that the Opposition wanted to incite hatred against the Government.

"Ours is not a question of hating but administering the country and we want to safeguard Islam."

Asked if the support of Malays had been restored, he said it would be restored after approaching them and providing clarification on what was actually happening.

"There is no conspiracy. There is no cruelty. We only want to save our country from a person who we feel is not qualified. That is all."

(END)