

16 JUL 2002
By-elections-Pendang
BN HAS THE EDGE OVER PAS IN PENDANG

PENDANG, July 16 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN), given the might of its election machinery, seems to have the edge over Parti Islam se-Malaysia (PAS) in Pendang.

PAS on the other hand feels it can withstand the BN's onslaught and retain the parliamentary seat won by its president, the late Datuk Fadzil Noor in 1999 general election.

During the two-year period under the opposition, there was virtually no development in the area. The BN realises this and is using it as a weapon against PAS.

"There is nothing PAS can give for the development of Pendang. They are only good at denigrating BN leaders and supporters," deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told voters during his almost daily rounds in the constituency.

In addition to this, Umno's stability, the end of the economic crisis and the people's concern over the implementation of Hudud in Terengganu are the plus factors for the BN.

The strong opposition from PAS is forcing Umno senior leaders, almost all of them, to come to the aid of their workers in Pendang compared to in the Anak Bukit state constituency.

The presence of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad in Pendang shows that the BN is serious about wanting to recapture Pendang.

For PAS, keeping the seat is important in memory of their late president. This could provide the tonic for PAS supporters to go all out to defend the seat.

PAS is confident of retaining the seat but with a reduced majority.

Even though the BN's candidate is well-known, it poses no problem for Dr Mohd Hayati Othman of PAS. Many people in the constituency know the opposition candidate who operates a private clinic in town.

Dr Mohd Hayati reported of good response to his campaign from the people for a newcomer.

"PAS supporters will vote for PAS. Our focus is on the substantial number of voters who are fence-sitters," he said.

Several areas in the constituency are regarded as strongholds of PAS such as Guar Kepayang, Bukit Raya and Gajah Mati.

In a move to bolster their campaign, PAS has summoned party giants -- Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Aziz Nik Mat to give ceramah in Pendang town last night and Terengganu Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang to give ceramah in Kubur Penjang tonight.

Dr Mohd Hayati is challenged by Datuk Othman Abdul who was elected representative for four terms from 1983 to 1999.

He lost the seat to Fadzil in 1999 with a 2,934-vote majority. The Pendang constituency has 53,128 voters including 170 postal voters.

-- BERNAMA
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