

19/07/2002

BN recaptures Pendang (HL)

ALOR STAR, Thurs. - Barisan Nasional recaptured the Pendang parliamentary seat from Pas but failed in its bid for the Anak Bukit State seat in today's by-elections.

It won Pendang with a very slim majority of 283 votes and managed to reduce Pas' majority to 508 in Anak Bukit.

In the 1999 general election, BN lost the Pendang seat to Pas by a majority of 2,934 votes and Anak Bukit by 1,840 votes.

BN candidate for Pendang Datuk Othman Abdul polled 22,825 votes while Pas' Dr Mohd Hayati Othman managed 22,542 votes. There were 346 spoilt votes.

Returning officer Saad @ Abdul Halim Hassan, who announced the results at 11.34pm at the Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Pendang, had earlier allowed a recount for the Pendang seat following a request from Pas.

The recount took about an hour.

There are 53,128 voters in Pendang and the total votes cast were 45,713.

There was no dispute over the Anak Bukit results announced by returning officer Datuk Hassan Taib at 9.10pm at the tallying centre in Auditorium Bernas.

Pas candidate Amiruddin Hamzah polled 8,298 votes, defeating BN's Datuk Zakaria Said who secured 7,709 votes.

There are 19,399 voters in Anak Bukit.

The victory in Pendang and the reduced Pas majority in Anak Bukit were viewed as a significant change in the voting trend among Malay voters who were perceived to have abandoned Umno in the 1999 general election.

However, the defeat in Anak Bukit meant the BN-led Kedah Government failed to grab the opportunity to regain its two-thirds majority in the State Assembly.

It lost its two-thirds after being defeated by Parti Keadilan Nasional in the Lunas by-election in November 2000.

BN chairman Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad said the results of the two by-elections showed that BN had penetrated some of Pas' strongholds.

Speaking from Seri Perdana in Putrajaya via video conferencing, Dr Mahathir said this was demonstrated in BN winning the Pendang seat which was previously held by former Pas president and Opposition Leader Datuk Fadzil Noor.

The Prime Minister added the win in Pendang was a win for the voters who had voted rationally and did not subscribe to the Opposition's tactics.

He added that this was due to the Government's efforts to restore the conditions in the area and the whole of Kedah, so that the State could continue with its development plans.

"We want to give a better life to the people of Kedah and hope to bring progress to the State by 2010," Dr Mahathir said.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said BN accepted the defeat in Anak Bukit and would hold a post-mortem soon.