

31 MAR 2002

Mahathir-Ketari

BN'S VICTORY PROVES THE SUCCESS OF THE BN CONCEPT, SAYS DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, March 31 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the splendid victory by Barisan Nasional (BN) in the by-election for the Ketari state seat proved the success of the concept of cooperation between the parties and communities upheld by BN.

"It is very clear that the voters and workers did not take into consideration which party or which ethnic community was contesting.

"When we work, we work for the success of Barisan Nasional, regardless of the race of the candidate or which party he comes from," the Prime Minister said in a live crossover on Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) as soon as the result of the by-election was announced tonight.

BN won with a big majority of 2,204 votes when its candidate, Yum Ah Ha polled 7,153 votes while the DAP candidate, Choong Siew Onn only managed to secure 4,949 votes.

Congratulating Yum, Dr Mahathir described the BN victory as excellent as the majority was almost 10 times more compared to the majority obtained during the general election in 1999.

"This shows that the reduced support during the 1999 general election was actually not because there was less confidence in the BN among the voters but probably due to a misunderstanding," said Dr Mahathir who was speaking from his residence at Putrajaya.

He participated in the live crossover together with Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi as well as leaders of the other component parties in the BN who were at the Bentong District Council Hall where the result was announced by the Returning Officer, Muhammad Safian Ismail at 9.10pm.

In the last general election, BN candidate Datuk Loke Koon Kam defeated Choong with a majority of only 231 votes. The by-election was held following Loke's death on March 3.

Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman, congratulated Abdullah who had led the BN election campaign which was participated by party workers from all the component parties as well as the Youth, Wanita and Puteri Umno movements.

"This shows that when we really work, we will succeed, the problem sometime arises when there is less effort, less people go down to the ground.

"This time, we have proven that efforts to be close to the rakyat is important to achieve success," he said.

Dr Mahathir also praised the police, Election Commission and everyone involved in managing the by-election well.

He said there was no incident such as the ones that occurred during the Lunas by-election in November 2000 where rough tactics were used by the opposition parties to prevent BN workers from carrying out their task.

"The running of the by-election proves that in Malaysia, democracy is well practised and there is no obstacle to anyone who wants to cast their votes even if they vote for the opposition.

"We give sufficient opportunities to anyone to campaign as long as they don't use force. This is our style in Malaysia," he added.

-- BERNAMA

SR AZZ AO