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Mahathir-Report

UMNO TO SUBMIT REPORT TO GOVERNMENT ON ROUGH TACTICS BY PAS

KUALA LUMPUR, July 24 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Umno will submit a report to the government on alleged intimidations and rough tactics by PAS supporters during last week's Pendang and Anak Bukit by-elections.

Such conduct should be nipped in the bud to prevent something more serious from happening and tarnishing the country's image, said the prime minister, who is Umno president.

"I am worried that if PAS supporters start ignoring police and are willing to detain buses and detain people...one day the police will have to use force, will have to shoot.

"Then if something happens, we will see riots in the country that will tarnish our image. That's why we should at the very outset ensure that such violent behaviour can be checked," he said after chairing the Umno Supreme Council meeting.

Dr Mahathir said Umno had information and evidence of the violent behaviour of PAS supporters during the by-elections, and would prepare the report as soon as possible.

"We leave it to the government to take action on this question of violence," he said.

During the campaign for the two by-elections from July 10 to 18, there were reports of violence, verbal abuses, threats, slanders and indecent acts.

In the closely fought by-elections, Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate Datuk Othman Abdul beat his PAS challenger Dr Mohamed Hayati Othman by a 283-vote majority in the Pendang parliamentary seat, while the BN's Datuk Zakaria Said lost to PAS candidate Amiruddin Hamzah in the Anak Bukit state seat by 508 votes.

Dr Mahathir said many people disagreed with the alleged rough tactics employed by PAS but were afraid to declare themselves as government supporters for fear of being boycotted by others as they lived in villages that have large numbers of PAS supporters.

He said today's meeting centered on Umno's performance in the two by-elections, and the Supreme Council members were satisfied with the party's showing.

They noted that although the ballot boxes showed that the BN did not win in some of the areas, an increasing number of people had voted for the coalition in almost all the areas.

"This means many people have returned to supporting Umno again. The reason we didn't win is because of the violent (behaviour) of PAS (supporters)...some of them are said to have brought weapons, parangs and so on, and issued strong threats to the Chinese. They intimidated using body language," he said.

Dr Mahathir claimed that some 600 Chinese voters in Anak Bukit did not come out to vote because of the PAS threats.

He said many Malay voters, including Umno supporters, too could not vote because PAS supporters allegedly blocked the roads leading to polling stations and frightened the voters.

Dr Mahathir claimed that the BN lost nearly 2,000 votes in Pendang because they voters were scared to come out and vote.

"...that's why we didn't win in Anak Bukit and won by just a slim margin in Pendang," he said.

The prime minister claimed that some PAS members threatened to divorce their wives if they supported the BN, and that "a number of PAS individuals" threatened to rape Puteri Umno members if they dared to step foot in PAS strongholds.

"PAS vigilantes did not allow Umno people to enter certain areas. They opposed and issued threats so that (BN) canvassers and others do not dare to enter (their areas)," he said.

Dr Mahathir claimed that to stop Wanita Umno and Puteri Umno canvassers from coming to their areas, the PAS supporters resorted to "lifting their sarong" in front of the women.

"This is the method used by a party that calls itself an Islamic party," he said.

Dr Mahathir also hit out at PAS for allegedly giving false information about him, including distributing a poster depicting him in a pair of shorts to give the impression that he was not a true Muslim leader.

Showing a copy of the poster to the media, he said: "This is a picture of me wearing shorts. This is my body but they seemed to have put the legs of someone else."

"Saudi and Kuwaiti football players wear shorts too," he added.

-- BERNAMA

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