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Kedah Umno not divided, says Dr Mahathir

Sharanjit Singh; Firdaus Abdullah

ALOR STAR, Sun. - Contrary to allegations, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said Kedah Umno was not divided but perhaps it did not work hard enough in the recent Anak Bukit and Pendang by-elections.

The Umno president was asked whether disunity in Kedah Umno could have contributed to the Barisan Nasional's defeat in the Anak Bukit state seat and its slim victory in the Pendang parliamentary seat.

"No, Kedah Umno is not divided. Maybe they did not work so hard because they are not `fanatics'," he said.

Asked about the kind of role he would give Kedah Umno to prepare it for future elections, Dr Mahathir said he would discuss and convey his views to the State Umno liaison committee.

The Prime Minister said this after meeting the people in conjunction with the closing ceremony of the K3P (Pendengar, Penonton dan Pembaca) exposition at Bandar Darul Aman near here.

Present were Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain, Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim and Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob.

The July 18 polls in Anak Bukit and Pendang saw BN wresting the Pendang seat from Pas while the Opposition party retained Anak Bukit.

Political observers and party insiders claimed that BN could have done better.

They said factions within Kedah Umno and an ineffective party machinery were the main reason for BN's defeat in Anak Bukit.

They also believed that BN could have secured a bigger majority in Pendang if Kedah Umno had worked harder.

However, Dr Mahathir said he was happy with the overall performance. "I think they worked very well but the rough tactics by Pas frightened a lot of people and made it difficult for people to go out and vote."

Dr Mahathir said realising the Chinese did not favour them, Pas would in future frighten the community to prevent them from coming out to vote.

"That is their tactics and they have already shown it."

Asked why Pas still enjoyed considerable support, Dr Mahathir said it was because the party had succeeded in brainwashing the Malays.

He said the party had fed people with all kinds of lies until one could no longer make a distinction between right and wrong.

"Now we can see people who curse, slander and tell lies and even people who expose their private parts are chosen.

"It is shocking that this is done by Muslims ...by the so-called Muslim scholars."

On Pas claims that its good performance in the by-elections showed people endorsed its policies, Dr Mahathir said: "They have actually succeeded in making religion a thing that can be played and used by them in any way they like. They are very successful and I would like to congratulate them."

Dr Mahathir said Pas had brought in thousands of supporters from other states in the by-elections and there were also cases of BN workers being assaulted, including an attempt to assault Shahidan.

On a demand by the Opposition that it be given coverage in mainstream media, Dr Mahathir said they should also consider doing so by printing correct information about BN in newsletters like Harakah.