

2 JUL 2002

Pendang-Sympathy

THE ROLE OF SYMPATHY VOTES IN PENDANG, ANAK BUKIT

By: Jamaludin Muhamad

PENDANG, July 2 (Bernama) -- On June 22, thousands cried upon hearing the shocking news that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is to step down after being at the nation's helm for 21 years.

The next day, thousands also cried when PAS President Datuk Fadzil Noor died.

Among those who wept are voters in the Pendang Parliamentary constituency and Anak Bukit state constituency. Both were represented by the late Fadzil.

How will they translate their sympathy into votes on polling day, July 18, for both by-elections?

Barisan Nasional and PAS have no answer but both agreed sympathy votes will play a big role in the two by-elections.

Tan Sri Muhammad Haji Muhammad Taib, Umno Vice President and coordinator for both by-elections, said sympathy votes could play a role to a certain degree.

"Sympathy votes as a result of the two events can play a role but we do not know to what extent," said Kedah PAS Commissioner Haji Azizan Abdul Razak.

He said the death of Fadzil would remain fresh in the voters' mind even on polling day.

Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain said if PAS used the death of Fadzil to gain sympathy votes, voters could also show their sympathy and love for Dr Mahathir when casting their votes.

"I believe the BN will gain more sympathy votes than PAS based on the strong support shown by the people," he said.

Political scientist Associate Prof Dr Mohamed Mustafa Ishak said the fact that PAS had shortlisted Fadzil's son Dr Amar as one of its possible candidates showed that they were banking on sympathy votes.

He said sympathy votes for PAS would be merely based on sympathy different with "positive sympathy" for BN where voters would translate their support for Dr Mahathir's move to remain in the government and hold party posts until October next year, into votes.

Voters also could use their "positive sympathy" votes this time to pay back for their mistake in choosing the opposition in the last general election.

However, he believed that voters nowadays were smart enough not to be too carried away by their own emotion.

Dr Mohamed believed voters in Pendang and Anak Bukit would be rational when casting their votes by taking into consideration the rapid development of the country and how the country emerged from the economic recession compared with other countries in the region.

-- BERNAMA

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