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`BN has penetrated Pas bastions

reports on "Anak Bukit and Pendang by-elections" by Shamsul Akmar; ANAK BUKIT, Thurs. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said results of the Pendang and Anak Bukit by-elections showed that Barisan Nasional 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 Pas former president and Opposition Leader the late Datuk Fadzil Noor.

"Although BN did not win in Anak Bukit, we managed to reduce Pas' majority," said Dr Mahathir, who is also Umno president.

Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali was with him during the video-conferencing.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi who was speaking to the Prime Minister from the Auditorium Bernas here, said BN accepted the defeat in Anak Bukit and would hold a post-mortem soon.

Abdullah said this time around, Umno managed to set up new branches in Anak Bukit in areas where there was none before.

When asked if the defeat in Anak Bukit was due to the choice of candidate, he said the party had not analysed the results yet.

Dr Mahathir said Pendang was not an easy seat to wrest as he himself lost the seat, which was then known as Kota Star Selatan, to Yusof Rawa in 1969.

He thanked Abdullah, Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and Perlis Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Shahidan Kasim for their hard work during the campaign.

Abdullah, Syed Razak, Umno vice-presidents Datuk Seri Najib Razak, Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib and Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin, secretary-general Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and MCA deputy president Datuk Lim Ah Lek were among those present in Anak Bukit.

Dr Mahathir said BN hoped to reduce the fanaticism among the electorate there and expressed regret that there were people who still supported parties like Pas.

"I hope they will see the light some day."

Dr Mahathir said the victory in Pendang was a victory for the people who rejected dirty tactics and name-calling.

The Prime Minister said the people's support was instrumental in the victory in Pendang and in reducing the majority in Anak Bukit.

Dr Mahathir said he did not know why Barisan Nasional lost in Anak Bukit but said outcome of elections was difficult to determine.

Abdullah also briefed Dr Mahathir on the allegations by the Opposition that phantom voters were brought into the two constituencies last night.