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Pas-Election

2004 ELECTION RESULTS BAD FOR PAS, BUT NOT ITS WORST

PETALING JAYA, March 26 (Bernama) -- The 2004 general election results were definitely bad for PAS but not the party's worst, PAS Central Committee member Datuk Kamaruddin Jaffar said today.

He said PAS' ability to retain the Kelantan State Government was a major achievement as this was the first time that any opposition party had been able to stay in power in a State for more than three terms.

"In Terengganu, PAS could stay in power for one full term, exceeding our previous record of two years in 1959-61," he told a forum on "General Election 2004: What's Next" at Menara Star here.

Kamaruddin, who retained the Tumpat Parliamentary seat in Sunday's general election, was among four panelists at the forum, jointly organised by The Star and the Asian Centre for Media Studies.

The other panelists were social activist Dr Chandra Muzaffar, the Director of Institute Alam dan Tamadun Melayu, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Prof Datuk Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, and a policy analyst at SEDAR Institute, Ong Kian Ming.

Kamaruddin said the recent redelineation exercise proved a major setback to both PAS and Keadilan in this election, especially Pas, as it had created more mixed constituencies compared to before.

"A Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) study showed, for the first time compared to the last three redelineation exercises, that clear Malay-majority seats were reduced," he added.

He said another factor for the PAS setback was what he claimed to be "outright manipulation of the election by the Election Commission and other Government agencies."

"The extremely high voter turn-out in Terengganu (87.43 per cent), Perlis (83.27 per cent), Kedah (80.93 per cent) and Kelantan (80.84 per cent) is extra-ordinary and indicates a possible manipulation of the voter-registration exercise," claimed Kamaruddin.

He said the fact that several defeated opposition candidates managed to win after a vote recount had further aroused suspicion of possible cheating in the counting of votes.

Kamaruddin said his party's findings showed that Umno members voted for the Barisan Nasional (BN), most Pas members voted for Pas but some voted for the BN or did not vote at all, while the elderly voters tended to vote for the BN due to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's Islamic image.

Another finding was that young voters also voted for the BN, which might have been due to the fading Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim issue, but claimed that the participation of large-scale phantom voters was prevalent.

Kamaruddin said the poor performance by Pas was also due to other factors, such as the post-Sept 11, 2001, fear of Islamic terrorism, the departure of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the Prime Minister and the weak opposition coalition.

He also charged that various forms of restrictions were imposed on the opposition parties, especially Pas and Keadilan, including the threat of the use of Internal Security Act (ISA) and the close monitoring of civil servants. All these contributed to the poor performance by the party.

"We were not able to hold ceramahs freely for the last three years or so. We couldn't create the momentum, let alone maintain and strengthen it and as polling day approached we knew, in actuality, that we were the

underdogs," he said.

-- BERNAMA
AT AHH SRI