

## **Don't blame me for lower majority, says Dr M**

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**By Radzi Razak**

Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad has disclaimed any responsibility in BN's reduced majority during the Rompin by-election.

"The focus there (in Rompin) is GST, higher cost of living, the increase in prices of goods and at the bottom (of the list) is 1MDB (1Malaysia Development Bhd).

"The kampung people do not understand the 1MDB issue. It is hard for them to imagine RM42 billion (of debts)," he told reporters after a function Putrajaya.

In recent months, Mahathir (right) has been constantly criticising Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak over his handling of the 1MDB controversy.

Mahathir had claimed that RM27 billion of RM42 billion in loans taken by 1MDB appear to be unaccounted for.

He also accused Najib of being too chummy with businessman Jho Low, who he believed had a role to play in 1MDB's business decisions.

Mahathir also warned the government to listen to the Rompin people's woes about the cost of living.

He mentioned specifically that the GST is a concern and raising the minimum wage is not the answer to addressing people's problems.

"If we look now, purchasing power has gone down and they (the people) have to pay for GST. This further reduces their income.

"I think if we raise the minimum wage, the cost of living is (still) increasing. That we have to remember. That, I think, is what the government should remember about the people," he said.

### **Majority reduced**

The Rompin by-election yesterday was the first poll to be called since Mahathir warned that BN will lose the next general election due to various controversies weighing Najib down.

Although BN had consistently won Rompin with an impressive 66 percent of the popular vote, the by-election yesterday saw BN's majority in Rompin slashed by 40.8 percent and popular vote drop to 60 percent.

BN top guns were quick to dismiss suggestions that Mahathir was a factor, pointing out that issues raised by him were not raised during the campaign.

A recent survey by independent pollster Merdeka Centre showed that the majority of respondents they understood little about the 1MDB controversy.

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