

Reduced majority? That's normal, says PM
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Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi brushed aside concerns over the reduced majority in yesterday's Machap by-election.

"Although the majority has dwindled, to me, this is normal. Sometimes the majority increases, sometimes it reduces," he said.

The by-election in the rural state seat of Malacca was seen as a barometer of support for opposition parties.

Despite the marginal decrease in the winning margin in what is considered a government stronghold, the ruling BN coalition hailed the victory as a sign of support for Abdullah.

MCA, a key partner in the ruling coalition, won the poll easily with 5,533 votes against 1,452 for the opposition DAP.

However, its majority was slashed by 481 votes compared to three years ago when the two parties last met

Najib: Proof of confidence

Deputy Prime Minister Najib Razak said the win was proof of confidence in Abdullah's leadership and his administration, the state Bernama news agency reported.

"It shows the people's support for the BN in Machap is still very strong," Najib was quoted as saying late Thursday after the result.

Analysts had said the DAP was not expected to win the by-election, but were on the lookout for a reduced majority for the ruling coalition.

Despite the landslide win, Najib said the coalition would conduct an investigation into its slightly reduced majority of 4,081 votes in Thursday's election, compared to its 4,562 margin in the last state poll in 2004.

Malaysia must hold a general election by early 2009, but opposition parties say they expect Abdullah to call a poll before then to head off what they say is growing disenchantment with his administration.

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