

DR M: PH MUST ADDRESS UNHAPPINES.

NST-29/1/2019 pg. 3

We must find ways to reduce cost of living, boost people's income, says PM

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THE government must address the people's unhappiness, especially when it comes to issues related to cost of living.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said this was among the takeaways from Pakatan Harapan's defeat in the Cameron Highlands by-election on Saturday.

He said the government must find the reason behind the people's unhappiness as it was the only way to tackle the issue.

"We need to know more about what they (the people) are unhappy about. We know (there are) many things, (including) the high cost of living.

"The (high) cost of living doesn't mean anything to the rich, but for the poor, it is a big problem," he said after a closed-door session with the top management of federal statutory bodies here yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said the government needed to find ways to reduce the cost of living and boost people's income.

He said the result of the Cameron Highlands by-election was not surprising as Barisan Na-



Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at a press conference after a closed-door session with top management of federal statutory bodies in Putrajaya yesterday. With him is Chief Secretary to the Government Datuk Seri Dr Ismail Bakar (third from right). PIC' BY AHMAD IRHAM MOHD NOOR

sional had strong support in rural areas.

"The win is not surprising because it is a rural area and they (BN) played up racial issues... and that is too bad.

"But that is the decision of the people and we accept it. We had a proper by-election. (There was) no hanky-panky. The result is according to the wishes of the people."

BN's Datuk Ramli Mohd Nor defeated PH's M. Manogaran with a 3,238-vote majority.

It was the first time BN won in the five by-elections held since the 14th General Election.

However, Dr Mahathir played down a view shared by a PH lead-

er who said that a factor that might have contributed to PH's defeat was due to certain voters who thought that Dr Mahathir was with BN.

"That is okay. They will eventually know."

On yesterday's meeting, he said the federal statutory bodies needed to shoulder their responsibility of being a "mini" version of the government.

"I tried to explain to the statutory bodies that they are similar to a mini version of the government. They must manage things like a mini-government."

On another matter, he said Malaysia stood firm on its principle against Israel even after the

International Paralympic Committee (IPC) stripped Malaysia of the right to host this year's World Para Swimming Championships.

"We stand by our principles that Israel is a criminal nation and it has been breaking international laws without anybody saying anything.

"So we have the right to voice our feelings and policies."

He said Malaysia's action was similar to that of the United States and several European nations in not allowing certain foreigners into their countries.

"We have the right to voice our feelings and to have our own policies. I don't understand why one must follow Israel. We don't."

He said he had no issue with IPC's decision as Malaysia "can host other games" in the future.

When asked about his past decision to allow Israeli cricket players into Malaysia in 1997, he said that was an unrelated case.

"We allowed the Israeli schoolchildren to come here (before) to show them that Muslims are not terrorists but normal people. We talk with people. We behave well and do not do anything wrong to them.

"But when children throw stones at them (the Zionist regime in Israel), they are shot with live bullets." **Additional reporting by Mohd Husni Mohd Noor and Zanariah Abd Mutalib**