

'PH WON'T SWEAT ON UMNO-PAS PACT'

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They can only cooperate during by-elections where win or loss does not mean much, says PM

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PAKATAN Harapan is not worried about the cooperation between Umno and Pas that contributed to Barisan Nasional's victory in the Semenyih by-election on Saturday, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He said Umno and Pas could achieve such cooperation only during by-elections where the victory did not mean much.

"In a by-election, a win or loss is not disastrous.

"What matters is the general election. They can't work together in a general election because Pas will not get anything," he said when asked if the government was threatened by the Pas-Umno cooperation against PH during by-elections.

Dr Mahathir, who is PH chairman, was speaking after opening National Landscape Day at the Botanical Garden here.

BN's Zakaria Hanafi recaptured the Semenyih state seat for the coalition in a four-cornered fight after polling 19,780 votes, with a majority of 1,914 votes.

PH's Muhammad Aiman Zainali polled 17,866 votes, while Parti Sosialis Malaysia's Nik Aziz Afiq Abdul and independent Kuan Chee Heng polled 847 votes and



Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad being briefed by SeriGreen Garden and Landscape managing director Jamaliah Hamdan at the opening of National Landscape Day at the Botanical Garden in Putrajaya yesterday. With him is Federal Territories Minister Khalid Abdul Samad.
PIC BY AHMAD
IRHAM MOHD-NOOR

725 votes respectively.

Dr Mahathir said PH would conduct a post-mortem soon to identify the cause of the coalition's loss in Semenyih, a seat that it won in the 14th General Election (GE14) in May last year.

He said the difference in the vote majority showed that Semenyih voters had changed their mind due to negative perception and religious provocation during the campaign.

"Some people unnecessarily provoke anger, like drawing cartoons of Prophet Muhammad, and this kind of thing doesn't contribute towards the betterment of this country. So we hope this is not repeated. It will make people angrier."

On Feb 26, factory worker A.

Taneson, 22, was charged at the Shah Alam magistrate's court with insulting Prophet Muhammad, while Wai Foo Sin, 68, was hit with two charges the next day for a similar offence.

Asked if the government's inability to fulfil its GE14 promises had contributed to the loss in Semenyih, Dr Mahathir said promises could not be fulfilled overnight.

He said the government needed more time to realise what was promised.

He said as PH worked to meet election pledges, the government also needed time to pay the more than Rm1 trillion debt left by the previous government.

Citing the East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) project debt as an exam-

ple, he said the government had to pay RM200 million in interest every six months to service the RM55 billion loan taken to implement the project.

"This means the money we have that should be used to help the people is forced to be used to pay the debt left to us."

He said discussions with the Chinese concessionaire for the project had led to a reduction of RM25 billion from the original cost.

"They have agreed to proceed for RM30 billion; RM25 billion cheaper than the original cost.

"This means that (former prime minister Datuk Seri) Najib (Razak) wanted to steal the money."

The RM81 billion 688km pro-

ject, which was mooted by Najib, aims to link Port Klang and Kota Baru and was slated for completion in 2024.

Dr Mahathir defended PH's allegation that Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang had paid RM1.4 million to Sarawak Report editor Clare Rewcastle-Brown as an out-of-court settlement for the defamation suit against him.

"We have the evidence and we are not going to hide it as the evidence is clear."

Asked why the money was paid through a government-linked company director, Dr Mahathir said the person could not be faulted.

"We are just upset by Pas' ways to lie and not tell the truth."