

Permatang Pauh By-Election: PKR's Exploitation Of National Issues Successful Defeating BN Bernama

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By Nur Adila Abdul Wahab

PERMATANG PAUH, May 8 (Bernama) -- Reducing PKR's majority in the Permatang Pauh constituency which it has held for 17 years in the by-election Thursday, is something to be proud of by the Barisan Nasional, but the opposition won because it successfully exploited national issues during its campaign.

Universiti Sains Malaysia's political analyst, Assoc Prof Dr Sivamurugan Pandian, however, said BN should not be satisfied, but instead work harder to ensure victory in the 14th general election, by efficiently countering negative perceptions and views about national issues sensationalised by the opposition.

He said that this time, issues such as the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) and 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB) should have been better explained by BN as these were factors in voter's rejecting the coalition.

"National issues affected the vote yesterday. The GST issue was played up by the opposition so much so that local issues were not given importance by the voters. Development issues were deemed irrelevant in Permatang Pauh. Such matters should be evaluated by BN," he told BERNAMA in Permatang Pauh, Friday.

The Permatang Pauh constituency by-election saw PKR president Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail winning the seat with a 8,841-vote majority when she received 30,316 votes to defeat BN candidate Suhaimi Sabudin, who received 21,475 votes.

Another two candidates, Salleh Isahak (Independent) and Azman Shah Othman (Parti Rakyat Malaysia) received 367 and 101 votes respectively. There were 843 spoiled votes.

According to the statistics of the by-election, the votes in favour of PKR fell by 1.39 per cent this time, receiving 30,316 votes or 57.04 per cent compared to 37,090 votes (58.43 per cent) obtained by Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (PKR) in the 13th General Elections (13th GE).

BN obtained total of 21,475 votes (40.4 percent), a slight increase in percentage from the 25,369 votes (39.97 per cent) it received in the 13th GE. According to the Election Commission (EC), the goal of an 80 per cent voter turnout was not achieved after only 74 per cent chose to vote.

Lecturer at the Faculty of Human Ecology, University Putra Malaysia (UPM), Prof Dr Ahmad Atory Hussain said it was difficult for BN to win the constituency due to the Anwar factor.

He said although BN managed to reduce the local issues in the area, it was not enough for the party to cause an upset because voters were still engrossed with the legacy of Anwar (who is now serving a prison sentence after being convicted of sodomy).

"They (voters) still want an Anwar legacy. The principle of adhering to PKR is still strong, so much so they are not willing to give votes to the BN candidate. I think there are voters who did not come out to vote because some of them were dissatisfied with with the current dominating issues.

"Current issues were also exploited well. With the existence of issues (such as) GST and 1MDB, it had a large impact. It was unfortunate for BN that these issues were trending when they were facing the by-election," he said.

He said BN should immediately address the issues raised for the party to maintain their position in the general election to come.

Commenting on BN's candidate for the by-election, Ahamd Atory said Suhaimi stands a good chance in the political arena based on the commitment, passion and dedication he showed during the by-election.

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