

Cost of living issues, not 1MDB, cause of lower Rompin majority, says Dr M
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By Md Izwan

Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said there were other issues that caused Barisan Nasional (BN) to reap a lower majority in the Rompin by-election yesterday, not his criticism of the current administration.

He said issues such as the higher cost of living and the goods and services tax (GST) had a greater impact on voters in the largely rural parliamentary seat than financial scandals involving 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB).

Dr Mahathir said he should not be blamed for causing a drop in votes for BN due to his criticism of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, as it was more likely that rural voters in a constituency like Rompin did not understand issues like 1MDB.

He said they would likely not be able to grasp details about the huge amount of losses incurred by the government-owned strategic development fund.

"I'm not a factor, the focus there is more on the cost of living and prices of goods.

"Most orang kampung (rural people) do not know what 1MDB is about, they would find it hard to imagine a sum of money as large as RM42 billion" he said, referring to the amount of debts the fund has incurred.

BN yesterday retained the Rompin parliamentary seat in the by-election, but saw its majority slashed by half compared to the 13th general election two years ago, with a lower voter turnout.

Dr Mahathir said the cause of the drop in votes stemmed from the government's introduction of the GST which he said had put pressure on consumers' purchasing power and squeezed their incomes even more.

"Purchasing power has decreased and they need to pay GST, so this has shrunk their incomes," he said.

Besides 1MDB, Dr Mahathir has also picked on the GST and suggested that Putrajaya scrap the 6% consumption tax introduced on April 1. – May 6, 2015.

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