

THE EASIEST SUCTION BERJAYA EVER FOUGHT

By N.V. RAMAN

KOTA KINABALU, Sun. — At the first count, Usno president Tan Sri Said Keruak lost his Usukan seat to Berjaya's Haji Yahya Lampong by 50 votes.

Usno asked for a recount and this time, Tan Sri Said emerged the winner. Haji Yahya asked for a recount but the result stood — Tan Sri Said had squeaked in by 89 votes.

That narrow victory for the Usno president, who was to have been Chief Minister if the opposition Barisan Sabah coalition had won, summed up the Sabah State elections.

Berjaya, which steam-rolled its way to 43 seats out of the 47 being contested, had not only made inroads into Usno strongholds but in many cases, beat the opposition men by huge margins.

Of the other parties in the Barisan Sabah, the United Pasok Nunukragang Organisation (Pasok) failed to win a single seat, and 13 of its candidates lost their deposits, while the Sabah Chinese Consolidated Party (SECP) won only Bandar Tawau out of the seven seats it had contested.

The Berjaya juggernaut swept all aside and made good party president and Sabah Chief Minister Datuk Harris Salleh's boast on March 5 that "this is the easiest election I have ever faced."

The Opposition had been counting on a vote-splitting formula to topple Berjaya. The crucial base this formula was built on was that Usno would hold on to its bloc of Muslim voters, with Pasok and the SCCP eating into Berjaya's Kadazan and Chinese support respectively.

In the event, Usno had completely misjudged its people.

The Muslims swung to Berjaya while Pasok and SCCP failed miserably in their attempts to eat into the other ethnic votes.

Although some Usno officials mourned about alleged "deviations" in the election process, others put it more bluntly: "Berjaya was just too strong and powerful for us. We did not realise the extent of their strength, and we lived in our own dreams, assuring each other we had a chance."

The stark truth was that Berjaya, with the resources at its disposal, had not only consolidated its original support but had also penetrated into the Usno strongholds.

Berjaya stressed that the party's five-year record in developing the State and restoring democracy was the springboard to its demolition of the opposition.

Apart from that, the voters also apparently decided to stick to the "assured future" that Berjaya offered rather than take a chance and return to the "dark ages" that Berjaya stressed would return if the Opposition won.

Berjaya successfully exploited the latent fear among the Kadazan and the Chinese that a vote for the Opposition would mean the return of former Usno president and Sabah Chief Minister Tun Mustapha bin Datuk Harun and

his right handmen, Datuk Syed Kechik and Datuk Dzulki-fly Hamid.

Pasok and the SCCP were tainted because of their association with Usno in the Barisan Sabah, and this proved to be their undoing.

Berjaya also won over the Muslims by pointing out that their constituencies had not benefited from development under Usno rule earlier, unlike what had been done for them by Berjaya.

The Berjaya theme of development struck a responsive chord with the voters — and Berjaya lived up to its promises by delivering the goods, not only during the past five years but also during the election campaign.

Against this, all the Opposition could do was rail against alleged corruption and "misrule" of Berjaya, and make promises of "cleaning up the Government" if elected.

But apparently, the voters were not concerned about these charges. All they were interested in was what each party could do for them, and Berjaya won hands down.

Very few people in Sabah believed Berjaya would live up to Datuk Harris' claim that Berjaya would make a clean sweep.

"Berjaya will win but the battle will be close. The most Berjaya will take are 35 seats with the others going to the Opposition," was the general consensus.

The turnout of supporters at the Opposition parties' ceremonies seemed to bear this out. But the voters apparently did the same thing they had done in 1976 when they went to Usno's rallies and cast their ballots for Berjaya.

Berjaya's success is being viewed as a desire by this electorate to get away from the economic, social and racial politics of old.

The party had gone to the voters proclaiming that its concept of a single multi-racial umbrella was



BERJAYAI. .. Datuk Harris Salleh and some of his successful Berjaya candidates in their moment of victory.

the only way to ensure that a united Sabah was brought into the mainstream of 20th century development.

Berjaya backed up its claim with its past record, and the voters had enough confidence to believe that more of the same would be done in the next five years.

Another crucial factor was that Berjaya had the full support of the business community, which realised earlier on that its close links with the State Government would be disrupted if the Opposition won, and acted accordingly.

"The business community was worried that if the Barisan Sabah won, the progress of the State and the business opportunities it offered could be terminated and they would be the losers," observers said.



Candidate for Moyog constituency Mr Conrad Mojuntin (third from right) who is also Deputy Finance Minister in a happy mood after he was announced the winner.



Berjaya's Datuk Fred Sinidol, who won in Kawang constituency, being chaired by his supporters.

Bahan asal dari Arkib
Negara Malaysia