

08 SEP 1996
Sarawak-Celebration
GLOOM AMIDST BN'S VICTORY JOY

By: Sobrey Jaafar and E. Sivabalan

KUCHING, Sept 8 (Bernama) -- The applause and shouts of Barisan Nasional leaders and supporters to celebrate the landslide victory suddenly ended when Sarawak United People's Party (SUPP) chairman Tan Sri Dr Wong Soon Kai entered the main hall of "Demak Jaya", the residence of Sarawak Chief Minister.

The situation in the hall turned even sadder when Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud sadly embraced Dr Wong who failed to defend his Bukit Assek state seat.

In tears, Dr Wong who was Deputy Chief Minister told Abdul Taib: "I'm sorry, I lost."

Dr Wong who arrived from Sibu at about 10pm after learning of his defeat was embraced one by one by those who had gathered at the main hall to follow the state election results telecast by Radio Television Malaysia (RTM).

Sarawak National Party (SNAP) president Datuk James Wong Kim Min could not control his emotion when he embraced his cabinet colleague and said in tears: "I am sorry, really very sorry on your defeat, I really don't understand what went into the people of Sibu.+"

Bukit Assek is one of the state constituencies in the Sibu district.

Dr Wong was later surrounded by BN supporters who expressed sympathy over his defeat.

He found time to answer questions from reporters and announced his intention to retire from politics.

Dr Wong said: "SUPP will hold party elections next year, I will not seek reelection."

Asked why he did not wish to seek reelection, he said sadly: "Because of my age and because I lost."

Dr Wong, 69, studied medicine together with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad at University of Malaya in Singapore.

Member of Parliament for Sibu, Robert Lau Hoi Chew who was also present told the press: "Tan Sri will not retire."

Dr Wong who came to the Chief Minister's residence in tears also departed in tears.

However, the candidates who were victorious and had come to see Abdul Taib were later greeted with applause and warm embrace.

Although Taib was happy with the successes of the BN component parties, he was clearly sad over the defeat of his favourite cabinet colleague.

The question that is on everyone's mind is who among the SUPP members would be appointed to fill the post of Deputy Chief Minister vacated by Dr Wong. -- BERNAMA

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