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Barisan Nasional captures Semerak

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KOTA BARU, Mon. - Pas' stronghold Semerak crumbled today when voters chose Barisan Nasional candidate Kamaruddin Mohd Nor, 50, as their new State Assemblyman.

Kamarudin won with a 778 majority when he polled 5,370 votes while Pas' Wan Mohd Fauzi Wan Hussain, 37, garnered 4,592 votes.

Another candidate, Mohd Din Nizam Din, 57, of Angkatan Keadilan Insan Malaysia (Akim), managed only 27 votes. Mohd Din lost his deposit.

The result was announced at 8.55pm by returning officer Md Yusof Noh at the Pasir Puteh Council Hall.

The announcement was greeted by loud cheers from BN supporters who had assembled at the hall since 5.30pm.

A total of 82.42 per cent of the 12,224 voters cast their votes. Of these, 85 votes were spoilt.

The by-election was called following the death of Pas assemblyman Sulaiman Ahmad on July 6.

He had won the seat in the 1995 general election defeating BN's Ismail Awang and Akim's Musa Salleh with a majority of 248 votes.

The BN, which lost to Pas in a straight fight in Pulai Chondong in an earlier by-election early this year, appeared to have regained the people's confidence by winning in Semerak in a three-cornered fight.

Vote counting at the respective centres today started immediately after polling ended at 5.30pm.

No untoward incidents were reported.

The first ballot box to reach the main counting centre was from Bukit Tanah at 6.56pm and the last was from Kg Besar which arrived at 8.30pm.

With the BN victory, Pas' majority in the State Assembly was reduced. It now has 25 seats compared with the BN which has 18.

Kamaruddin, when making his victory speech, thanked the people, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim and the BN election machinery for their support.

He described his victory as the beginning of change which the BN has promised for Kelantan.

State BN chairman Datuk Annuar Musa said the victory showed the rakyat wanted "a change for the better".

Many of the BN leaders said the win was a big step forward for the coalition to return to power in Kelantan which it lost to the Opposition in the 1990 general election.

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