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BN sweeps all 3 seats in by-elections

BARISAN Nasional (BN) made a clean sweep in by-elections for three constituencies held simultaneously yesterday, retaining the Permatang and Repah state seats and the Kuala Selangor parliamentary seat.

BN candidate for Permatang Datuk Abu Hassan Omar, who is the Selangor Menteri Besar-designate and former domestic trade and consumer affairs minister, beat Mohd Maskuri Mardzuki of Pas by a majority of 7,780 votes. Abu Hassan polled 9,590 votes against Maskuri's 1,810 votes.

The victory paves the way for Abu Hassan, 56, to become Selangor's new Menteri Besar, replacing Tan Sri Muhammad Muhammad Taib who resigned on April 9. Abu Hassan is expected to be sworn before speaker Datuk Onn Ismail today as the new state assemblyman for Permatang.

He can only be sworn in as the state's sixth Menteri Besar as soon as the Sultan of Selangor returns home from London tomorrow.

Abu Hassan, in his victory speech, said BN's ability to retain Permatang and Kuala Selangor showed Kuala Selangor is still the coalition's stronghold.

"This by-election has redeemed BN's image after its defeat in Teluk Intan," an elated Abu Hassan said at the tallying centre in Dewan Melawati in Kuala Lumpur last night, Bernama reported.

He said the win was a culmination of teamwork and cooperation of the Umno and BN's election machinery.

Abu Hassan said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is on two months' leave beginning May 19, had telephoned him from Argentina an hour before the results was announced and was told that the BN had won.

"Dr Mahathir conveyed his greetings and gratitude to all parties who have worked for BN's victory," he said.

Abu Hassan said he also contacted Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to inform him of BN's win in the two seats.

He said Anwar also thanked the BN election machinery and was thankful to God for the victory.

The majority obtained by Abu Hassan is an increase over the 7,276-vote majority secured by Datuk Jamaluddin Adnan in the 1995 general election, who swapped seats with Abu Hassan for the by-election.

Under the Selangor Constitution, only a state assemblyman can be made Menteri Besar.

Jamaluddin won the Kuala Selangor parliamentary seat when he secured a 18,342-vote majority over Pas candidate Ahmad Alang. Jamaluddin polled 24,019 votes and Ahmad 5,677 votes.

The majority obtained by Jamaluddin was, however, smaller compared with the 23,460-vote majority received by Abu Hassan in 1995.

A total of 64.49 per cent of the 18,517 registered voters cast their ballots for the Permatang by-election. There were 484 spoilt votes.

The turnout for the Kuala Selangor parliamentary seat, which has an electorate of 49,527, was 62.14 per cent. There were 1,053 spoilt votes.

Jamaluddin said he was excited with the win which gave him and Abu Hassan a clear mandate.

Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Mustapa Muhamed, who was also present at the hall, said the win was a special gift to Dr Mahathir.

"The big and clear mandate will enable Abu Hassan to bring Selangor, the country's most developed state, to greater heights," he said.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Dr Ting Chew Peh said the

win showed the voters in Kuala Selangor were united and matured in politics.

They had unanimously made an accurate and perfect decision by voting in Abu Hassan and Jamaluddin.

"I'm confident Abu Hassan and Jamaluddin will bring in more development not only to Kuala Selangor but the whole state," said Dr Ting, who is MCA secretary-general.

Meanwhile, BN candidate Gary Gan Chin Yap defeated DAP's Wong Yauk @ Wong Zee Nyok with a 2,191-vote majority for the Repah state seat in Negri Sembilan.

Gan polled 4,486 votes against Wong's 2,295. There were 147 spoilt votes.

A total of 6,928 or 60.76 per cent of voters cast their ballots in the by-election held following the death of Datuk Lay Chun Tai on April 29. Lay had won the seat in the 1995 general election with a 2,791-vote majority.

Gan, in his victory speech, pledged to look after the interest of the constituents and work hard in serving the people effectively.

"I will ensure that the people would benefit from the development programmes announced by the BN Government," he said.

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