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All part of democratic process: PM

Lokman Mansor; Fadzil Ghazali

BARISAN Nasional (BN) accepts its loss in Kelantan and Terengganu as part of the democratic process practised in Malaysia, Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"We will win them back next time," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a press conference in Kuala Lumpur early this morning after results showed that BN had won more than two-thirds majority in parliament.

He announced that BN had won control of all states except Kelantan and Terengganu. BN won only one parliamentary and two state seats in Kelantan, and only four state seats in Terengganu.

"We accept that because ours is a democratic country. In a democratic election you can lose as well as win. In the states that we won we got more than two-thirds majority in the state assemblies," he added.

Asked about the loss in Terengganu, Dr Mahathir said the voters were influenced by Pas' threats and promises that those who voted for Pas will go to heaven.

"Some people in government agencies were also on their side. In some places, when we asked for a recount our request was denied. We would like to find out why this happened. We will have a post mortem," he said.

Asked if the loss in the two states showed that BN has lost its support in the Malay heartland, Dr Mahathir replied: "Kelantan and Terengganu are not all of the Malay heartland. Look at Johor."

BN secured all parliamentary and state seats in Johor.

On the loss of some state seats in Kedah, his home state, Dr Mahathir said: "Well, you lose some, you win some."

Asked about vote discrepancies, he said there were cases of misprints in postal votes, but where the votes were in BN's favour there were declared invalid, but were declared valid if they were in Pas' favour.

"We are looking into this and will make a complaint if there is basis," Dr Mahathir said.

On the loss of some key BN figures, he said the Opposition too had lost some of their heavyweights including DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang and DAP vice chairman Karpal Singh.

"We still have champions (in BN). I won," Dr Mahathir added.

Asked by a foreign journalist whether the BN government will act against the Opposition now that it has won the elections, he said the elections are meant to establish a Government and not to quarrel with the Opposition.

"We will be prepared to work with the Opposition outside of politics. Politically of course we will have different views. Our concern is that Pas will continue this enmity towards us until the next election, because they know that if they allow their followers to get close to us, they will lose," Dr Mahathir said.

On Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail's victory in Permatang Pauh, he said most of the support she received were sympathy votes. "The question is whether she can contribute anything at all."

Asked whether the smaller margin of votes between BN and the Opposition signifies that the people desire some changes, he said:

"Actually, we promised to get more than two-thirds majority in parliament. We did not promise anything about margins. As far as we are concerned, they gave us more than two-thirds, and that is clear proof that