

30 NOV 1999

4th LEAD Election

BN SWEEPS TO POWER WITH TWO-THIRDS MAJORITY, LOSES TERENGGANU

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad led the Barisan Nasional (BN) to another landslide victory in the general election with a two-thirds majority thrown in, but lost control of Terengganu to Parti Islam SeMalaysia (Pas).

It romped home with 148 of the 193 parliamentary seats contested, 20 more than the two-thirds mark.

Pas, which contested the general election by partnering three other opposition parties to take on the BN one-on-one in most of the 193 parliamentary and 393 state seats at stake, was the biggest winners among the opposition front, Barisan Alternatif.

The party won 27 parliamentary seats, more than triple its previous tally of eight, all gains made at the expense of Umno, the dominant party in the BN led by Dr Mahathir, who was re-elected in the Kubang Pasu constituency in his home state of Kedah.

Pas also retained the Kelantan state government for the third term with even bigger margins. It won 13 of the 14 parliamentary seats with the sole BN survivor being state Umno chief, Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah.

It won a record 41 of the 43 state seats, dispelling predictions that the BN would wrest the state this time.

Most astonishing was the way Pas swept to power in Terengganu, which carries with it the coveted annual oil royalty of at least RM400 million from Petronas for the new Pas state government to spend. PAS won 28 of the 32 state seats and all the eight parliamentary seats in the state.

A stunned outgoing Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad, who has ruled the state for over 25 years, said he was shocked by the defeat.

Conceding defeat, he said: " I accept defeat because it is the will of the people".

Despite the resounding two-thirds majority win, the polls also turned out to be a costly affair for BN as four of its ministers lost.

They are Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Megat Junid Megat Ayob, Entrepreneur Development Minister and Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, Land Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa and Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman.

Several deputy ministers also failed to retain their seats. They are all the three deputy ministers from Terengganu, Datuk Abu Bakar Daud, Datuk Tengku Mahmud Mansor and Datuk Idris Jusoh, and Datuk Ibrahim Ali from Kelantan.

Meanwhile PAS Terengganu Commissioner Abdul Hadi Awang asked the people of Terengganu to accept the results of the general election.

Thanking the people, including PAS workers for giving PAS the mandate to rule the state, Abdul Hadi, who has been tipped to be the next Menteri Besar of Terengganu, said:

"Let's work together to govern our state as best as we could...hopefully we will get Allah's blessings."

When parliament was dissolved on Nov 11 to pave the way for the snap polls, the 14-party BN held 166 seats.

Dr Mahathir today announced that the BN won all the state governments with a two-thirds majority, except in Kelantan and Terengganu.

"We will form the central government as soon as we get the official results," he said to even more thunderous applause from the supporters who

had been waiting for hours for the returns to trickle in via television screens.

Dr Mahathir, who led the BN into his fifth general election in the 18 years he has been prime minister, campaigned tirelessly during the election with a strong message to voters to give the BN a two-thirds majority.

A two-thirds majority is necessary to amend the Federal constitution but Dr Mahathir had said many times it was more needed to provide a strong government to take Malaysia into the new millennium.

Asked on the loss of the oil-rich state of Terengganu, he said: " We win some, we lose some".

But he said the opposition also lost some of their big names like DAP Secretary-General Lim Kit Siang and Vice Chairman Karpal Singh.

This was Lim's first ever defeat in a parliamentary contest in his eight general elections since 1969.

"So clearly BN is still the party of choice of the people of Malaysia," he said.

Conceding defeat in Terengganu, held by the BN since 1961, and the BN's failure to wrest Kelantan from Pas, Dr Mahathir said: " We have unfortunately lost two states to the opposition. We will win it back the next time."

Meanwhile, Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail, wife of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, became the torch-bearer for her husband after his sacking and formed Parti Keadilan Nasional with some of the most staunchest allies.

Dr Wan Azizah, until recently a low-profile housewife, became Keadilan president and easily won the Permatang Pauh parliamentary seat which Anwar won in the past four general elections.

Anwar was touted by the Barisan Alternatif as its candidate for prime minister if it came to power, but did not contest the election as he is serving a six-year jail sentence for abuse of power.

Dr Wan Azizah in her first comments following her victory, vowed to address several issues.

In a phone-in interview with CNN, she said among the issues were corruption, abuse of power and the "fuzziness: between the legislative and the executive in the Malaysian system.

Wan Azizah said her victory meant that "the majority of voters have clearly given me a mandate." -- BERNAMA

AU SHY