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BN will have to look into reduced victory margins

Lokman Mansor

BARISAN Nasional (BN) has secured the more than two-thirds majority in Parliament that it was aiming for, but one issue that needs to be addressed in the party's post-mortem for the 10th general elections is the reduced margins by which BN candidates had won.

Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, when asked about this at a press conference early Tuesday morning, said: "We promised to get more than two-thirds. We didn't promise anything about the margin".

As the election results were flashed on a big screen at the Putra World Trade Centre in Kuala Lumpur that night, BN supporters and the press were clearly taken aback by how close many of the contests were.

With the exception of a handful of seats, particularly in Sabah and Sarawak, most of the BN candidates saw their majorities reduced compared to the 1995 elections, some quite significantly.

In Pahang, Education Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak retained his Pekan parliamentary seat by only 241 votes against his previous convincing majority of 10,793 votes in the 1995 elections.

Also in the state, Wan Mohamad Razali Wan Mahussin defeated his opponent from Keadilan, Mohd Jafri Ab Rashid, by the slimmest margin in the elections of only 5 votes. Wan Mohamad Razali won the Cini state seat in 1995 by a majority of 3,191.

In Perak, Deputy International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Kerk Choo Ting retained his seat by a majority of 637 votes. He overwhelmed his rival in 1995 by 16,767 votes.

Among the state seats in Perak, BN's Ho Cheng Wang retained Pokok Assam with a majority of 145 votes against 4,828 votes previously, while in Selangor, Datin Paduka Zaleha Ismail kept her seat by 803 votes compared to her previous victory by 30,878 votes.

In the Federal Territory, Deputy Information Minister Datuk Dr Suleiman Mohamed edged out his opponent Mohamad Noor Mohamad of Pas by 1,513 votes, against his previous majority of 18,966.

In Perlis, Deputy Home Minister Datuk Azmi Khalid defeated Keadilan's Mohd Anuar Mohd Tahir by a margin of 4,519 votes, compared to his 1995 majority of 10,070 votes.

In Bandar Tun Razak, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Deputy Minister Datuk Tan Chai Ho defeated Keadilan deputy president Dr Chandra Muzaffar by a margin of 1,224, compared with his majority of 14,735 in 1995.

"Since my results did not reflect my expectations, I have to go back and do a study on why this happened. It was certainly a tough fight," Tan said after the results were announced.

The vote swing obviously affected both sides, and among the opposition candidates it even saw the defeat of DAP secretary-general Lim Kit Siang and DAP vice president Karpal Singh in both their parliamentary and state seats.

Also startling were the defeat of several Cabinet members, particularly in Kelantan and Terengganu, which were overwhelmingly won by Pas.

Among those who lost were Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob, Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa, Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Abdul Hamid Othman, Deputy Agriculture Minister Datuk Tengku Mahmud Mansor, Deputy Science, Technology and

Environment Minister Datuk Abu Bakar Daud, and Deputy Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Idris Jusoh.

In Terengganu, where Pas will now form the state government, Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad was defeated by 436 votes against his previous majority of 2,571.

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