

13 MAR 1999

Sabah-Election

BN WINS BUT WITH WEAKER KADAZANDUSUN PRESENCE

KOTA KINABALU, March 13 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional (BN) swept back to power in Sabah with an almost two-thirds majority in the just-ended ninth state election, but the victory was dampened by the defeat of Chief Minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok and with its Kadazandusun component parties almost wiped out.

The BN won 31 seats with Umno winning all the 24 seats but its Kadazandusun partners Parti Demokratik Sabah (PDS), Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah (PBRs) and Akar performed disastrously, winning only in two areas of the 16 constituencies they contested.

The two Kadazandusun areas won by BN were Ranau and Kuala Penyu in which Datuk Siringan Gubat and Datuk Wences Angang, both of PDS, survived while their other colleagues were set aside by voting along ethnic sentiments.

Deputy Chief Minister Datuk Joseph Kurup (PBRs) and Minister of Culture, Environment and Tourism Datuk Wilfred Bumburing (PDS) were defeated in Bingkor and Tamparuli, respectively. Both were defectors from PBS.

The Chinese-based Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP) won three seats for BN - the party president Datuk Yong Teck Lee retained Likas, Datuk Tham Nyip Shen in Elopura and Datuk Raymond Tan in Tanjung Papat.

All 48 Bersekutu candidates were defeated, most of them losing their deposits.

Its acting president Datuk Harris Salleh himself was trounced by Yong, who is also a former chief minister, in the Muslim-majority Likas.

Yong won by a comfortable margin of 4,962 votes after garnering 9,110 votes. Harris managed only 3,576 votes to come in third in the six-way race.

PBS won the other 17 seats of Kadamaian, Tandek, Tamparuli, Pensiangan, Kiulu, Tambunan, Bingkor, Sembulan, Kundasang, Labuk, Inanam, Api Api, Sri Tanjung, Moyog, Melalap, Matunggong and Kuamut.

PBS had predicted it would win several Muslim constituencies and return to power with 32 seats but it only managed to capture Kuamut, a Muslim-majority area when its deputy president Haji Malek Chua polled 3,286 votes to win by a majority of 509 votes.

Both Pairin and Harris expressed great disappointment over the results and said this was not what they had expected.

More disappointed perhaps was Dompok who had been extremely confident of retaining Moyog for the BN and continue with his chief ministership under the rotation system introduced by the BN.

Dompok, who had been convinced that the Moyog constituents had accepted the thrust of the BN campaign of bringing development, obtained only 6,482 votes as compared to the 10,870 votes garnered by his arch-rival Datuk Clarence Bongkos Malakun of PBS.

The Islamic party PAS lost in the six areas that it contested.

From the results, the Muslim voters strongly responded to BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's hard campaigning, asking them to back Umno and ensure a big victory for BN.

The polls ended almost incident-free except for some misunderstanding between rival party supporters in Kuala Penyu.

A visibly disappointed Harris said the results were odd and shocking as he had come to know that the people were seeking change and supporting

Bersekutu.

He claimed there was a possibility of cheating in the polls and that the party would lodge a police report over the matter.

Pairin, who was also disappointed, said the PBS struggles were not over yet as parliamentary election were due soon and that the party was confident it would be represented at the federal level.

" The people gave their full support to the PBS and rejected the former PBS members who had crossed over to the BN," Pairin said of the 14 defeated Kadazandusun BN candidates.

-- BERNAMA

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