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Famous Barisan victory in Sabah

IT'S a famous victory for the Barisan Nasional. Once again Sabah voters have proved the Cassandras wrong. They have decided for stability and development which only the BN coalition can deliver. The results were far, far better than expected. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had forecast a simple majority. But final returns gave the BN a thumping victory that fell just one seat short of a two-thirds majority.

Last week's election outcome in Sabah sent significant signals. They told the sad but solid tale that politicians and parties who emerge only at the hustings have no support of the electorate. Thus Datuk Harris Salleh and Parti Bersekutu Sabah were nailed to their political coffins. Setia, Pasok and independent candidates suffered the same fate. They were rejected abjectly by the voters. The same gloom and down befell on the self-proclaimed Islamic party, Pas. Its performance, coming on the back of its prediction of the demise of the BN and Umno, was dismal. All its six candidates could not even garner enough votes to secure their electoral deposits.

The election also showed that the Sabah people prefer a two-party State. PBS, by securing 17 seats in the mainly Kadazandusun-dominated constituencies, has proved that it is still a political force in the State. But its hold and appeal is diminishing as apparent from its less than domineering performance this time around. The last time it garnered 25 seats.

BN's victory perhaps is a manifestation of the sentiments of the Sabah people. Many constituencies which were previously won by the PBS were captured by the BN. These include areas where the successful PBS candidates crossed over to the BN days after the 1994 election.

The election outcome augurs well for Sabah. The BN coalition not only ensures stability but also continued and sustained development which the State has not seen much before 1994. For their endorsement of the national coalition, the people would surely be rewarded.

But lessons should be learnt from history. The BN, for one, should resist the temptation to encourage PBS Assemblymen to cross over. Ethically, it is wrong. Politically, it is not wise.

Party-hopping of Assemblymen is obnoxious to say the least. It gives credence to the widely-held notion that politics is all about money. The electorate's decision must be respected. Money should not rescind their choice. No one, least of all the BN, should sacrifice democracy at the altar of Mammon.

The BN is already strong with 31 seats. With the six Assemblymen it now has the right to nominate, the BN should build its own strength in the constituencies it does not control. It should endeavour to garner the continued support and endorsement of the Sabah people on its past and future governance of providing development and ever improving lives.

The outcome of last week's election has a more important portend. While Sabah politics is vastly different from that of the peninsular States and Sarawak, BN's victory in the "land below the wind" is a morale booster to the national coalition that is currently preparing for the general election. It should also send a reminder to cynical political observers and analysts that the Government headed by Dr Mahathir is still strong and, more importantly, still has the endorsement of the people.

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