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Let the work begin

THE Barisan Nasional has successfully negotiated the formal process of democracy that will put together its 10th freely elected Government. Its victory is a clear indication that "the Barisan Nasional is still the party of choice of the people of Malaysia", as Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad put it at the Press conference after the BN had obtained more than a two-thirds majority.

The BN's performance, notably in Sabah, Sarawak, Negri Sembilan and Johor, should silence its critics. It shows the people's continued support for its policies.

If there is any doubt about our democratic process, the results of the 10th general election should quell it. Over the last 42 years, democracy in Malaysia has been sustained on the express wish of the people for security and stability in their daily lives.

And the fresh mandate given by Malaysians to the Barisan Nasional to govern the country is based on the expectation that the rakyat's wish would be respected.

As the excitement leading to polling day dies, both victor and vanquished would do well to forgive and forget the hurts arising from the verbal wars fought in the nine-day campaign period. The people have chosen and there is little point in raking up the past. The only way to go is forward.

Since every Yang Berhormat in the Federal and State legislatures will be judged on just how much he or she delivers, it is time to get to work to justify the electorates' confidence in them.

Remember, there are pledges that must be kept if the practice of Malaysian democracy and Government is to retain credibility and respect. There have been promises of good governance and these will doubtless be remembered by voters.

And, as the Prime Minister aptly articulated it, "The BN is grateful for the support given by the people. We will ensure that this country will remain free, united and successful."

There are lessons to be learnt from the election. Parties in the BN which have encountered unexpected shocks should take stock of the situation and identify shortcomings. There is a need to look at the drop in support, especially those ministers who lost their seats by a big majority. Several Ministers and Deputy Ministers were among the losers.

They are Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed in Jeli, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob in Parit, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Hamid Othman in Sik, Deputy Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Bakar Daud, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Ibrahim Ali and Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mohktar Ahmad.

The post-mortem should not be left to the Prime Minister alone, however. The Menteri Besar, Chief Ministers and party heads should all contemplate on what had gone wrong in the areas where the BN did not succeed.

For those who suffered defeat, draw strength and resilience from the experience. Failure is not forever and steps should be taken to ensure BN's strength in the next general election.

Complicated as it is, life goes on and the process of nation-building will have to continue too as the nation prepares to move on to the next millennium.

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