

16 MAR 1999

Singapore-Editorial

MAHATHIR'S POLITICAL STRENGTH PROVEN BY SABAH ELECTION

SINGAPORE, March 16 (Bernama) -- The Barisan Nasional's (BN) convincing win in the Sabah state elections has proved Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad's political strength, said Singapore's leading newspaper, Straits Times.

"There appears little disagreement though that Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad has proved once again his political ability to turn looming adversity to surprising advantage.

"Those who are wondering whether the Sabah polls would spell the beginning of his political eclipse have learned again that his imprint on politics is not to be written off so easily," it said in an editorial.

The BN captured 31 of the 48 seats at stake, exceeding its own forecast of 28 seats.

The outcome disproved predictions of many observers and showed "the coalition's strength at a time when the Malaysian scene was complicated by economic and political issues", it said.

The newspaper said the victory would improve the standing of Dr Mahathir who had "campaigns tirelessly" for the election which provided the BN the opportunity to test electoral waters after the sacking of his deputy, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

But it remained to be seen if the BN could transform the success of the Sabah elections into victory at the next general election but "it certainly has got off to a good start", it said.

"While the front is rightly heartened by its victory, the truth is that it is difficult to extrapolate from the results on a national scale," said the newspaper.

Anwar's downfall and his trial had none of the repercussions in Sabah as they had in the rest of Malaysia. The country's next general election is scheduled by April next year.

"Then, the confluence of Muslim-Chinese interests that propelled the front to victory in Sabah is being tested elsewhere, not by differences between the two communities, but by polarisation on the Malay ground over the Anwar issue, though the Chinese appear to be supportive of the status quo," said the Strait Times.

Anwar is currently on trial for corruption charges.

--BERNAMA

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