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Mahathir-Victory

VICTORY SHOWS BN IS STILL POPULAR: MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 30 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Barisan Nasional (BN) victory with more than two-thirds majority in the 10th general election shows that the BN is still enjoying high popularity.

"BN managed to win 149 parliamentary seats which is more than the 132 parliamentary seats won in the 1995 general election," he said at a press conference at the Putra World Trade Centre, here as soon as it was announced that BN had obtained more than two-thirds majority.

He said although the number of 149 parliamentary seats won was not official, it was a significant victory.

Dr Mahathir, who is also BN chairman and Umno president, started the press conference by saying: "I am very grateful and happy to announce that the BN had won with more than two-thirds majority."

The announcement was greeted with shouts of "Long live Mahathir" and "Long live BN" by more than 200 BN guests who were invited to follow the results of the general election.

When Dr Mahathir made the announcement at 3am this morning, BN had officially won 131 parliamentary seats.

He said that at the last general election although BN won 132 parliamentary seats, the number increased to 162 seats following the participation of Members of Parliament (MPs) from Parti Melayu Semangat 46 (S46) after the party was dissolved.

"It's clear that in the 1999 general election, BN had proven that its popularity is still high by winning 149 parliamentary seats," he said.

Dr Mahathir said BN had also retained all states except for Terengganu and Kelantan in the general election.

"In the other states (that is the states retained by the BN), we won with more than two-thirds majority," he said.

The Prime Minister also said that it was the first time the general election saw the defeat of "opposition strongmen" namely DAP secretary general Lim Kit Siang and DAP deputy chairman Karpal Singh in Pulau Pinang.

Lim lost to BN's Chia Kwang Chye for the Bukit Bendera parliamentary seat while Karpal was defeated by Gerakan's Lee Kah Choon in the Jelutong parliamentary seat.

When asked why Lim and Karpal lost, Dr Mahathir said he believed they could not prove their "usefulness" as members of parliament.

"Their debates in the Dewan (Rakyat) were useless. I feel that's why they were rejected," Dr Mahathir said.

When asked on the defeat of many Umno leaders in the general election, he said: "The same is also true of the opposition. We don't lose our strongmen."

"I won," he said which was greeted by cheering from those invited.

Dr Mahathir said the new cabinet would be formed after "the list of winners had been scrutinised."

Four cabinet ministers failed to defend their parliamentary seats in the general election.

They are Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayub, Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Abdul Hamid Othman and Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa.

Dr Mahathir also said the BN would form the government "as soon as

possible" in states where it had won.

On the victory of Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail in the Permatang Pauh parliamentary constituency, Dr Mahathir said he believed it was due to the people's sympathy for Dr Wan Azizah.

Dr Wan Azizah is the wife of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

"I think there will be a lot of sympathy when you go with your child and cry (at political gatherings). I can understand the feelings of the people. I think it is only right (for the people to have sympathy in such a situation).

"But the question is whether she can contribute anything at all," he said.

When asked on the role of PAS which is expected to become Opposition Leader in the Dewan Rakyat, Dr Mahathir said: "Nothing. Only profanities."

To a question, Dr Mahathir acknowledged that the majority of the Chinese voters have given their support to BN this time around.

"I think the Chinese appreciate what the government does for them, especially in overcoming the financial crisis. The rural Malays did not feel the effects of the financial turmoil," he said.

At the press conference which was also attended by foreign journalists, a BN supporter had asked Dr Mahathir to advise the foreign media to "stop writing negative things on Malaysia."

With a smile, Dr Mahathir said: "That is freedom of the press to tell or not to tell lies."

--BERNAMA

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