

12 OCT 2002

Gaya-BN

BN RETAINS GAYA WITH BIGGER MAJORITY, KEADILAN CANDIDATE LOSES DEPOSIT

KOTA KINABALU, Oct 12 (Bernama) -- Barisan Nasional (BN) retained the Gaya parliamentary seat with a 11,923-vote majority, almost a threefold increase as compared to the 1999 general election, in the by-election today.

BN's candidate Liew Teck Chan, 54, who is vice-president of Sabah Progressive Party (SAPP), polled 15,639 votes against 3,716 by his closest rival Hiew King Cheu of DAP.

Another candidate Christina Liew, 50, from Parti Keadilan Nasional (Keadilan) could only manage 2,613 votes and lost her RM5,000 deposit.

Christina needed at least 2,746 votes to keep her deposit.

The results were announced by Returning Officer Alijus Sipil at 9.15pm.

Liew's winning majority is a stronger mandate from voters than the 4,117 secured by BN in the 1999 general election despite a much lower voter turnout of 44.73 per cent this time as compared to 58.14 per cent in the last general election.

The bigger majority has proven true the anticipated increase in support for BN following the return of Parti Bersatu Sabah (PBS) to the coalition in January.

A total of 22,100 of the 49,427 registered voters in the constituency cast their ballots at 22 polling centres since they opened at 7.30am.

According to the Election Commission Secretary Datuk Wan Ahmad Wan Omar the voter turnout in this by-election was among the lowest ever recorded in the country's by-election history.

Among the main reasons for the low turnout was voters having moved to other areas, he said.

A check by Bernama showed a higher voter turnout in Malay and non-Muslim Bumiputera majority areas compared to predominantly Chinese areas.

Polling, however, proceeded smoothly. The Election Commission has described the campaigning as the cleanest ever for a by-election.

The Maksak Hall in Likas reverberated with a thunderous applause from BN supporters as soon as Alijus announced the results.

BN component party leaders hailed the results as proof of the solid support from the people to the ruling coalition.

Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, in his speech, thanked voters in the constituency for giving a resounding victory to the BN.

He also thanked BN election workers for their hardwork in ensuring BN's victory.

"I wish to take this opportunity to say that all the projects proposed by Datuk Yong Teck Lee (former Gaya MP) will be continued by the new MP," he said.

In his victory speech, Liew thanked Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Abdullah and BN component party leaders for their trust and confidence in picking him as the candidate for the constituency.

He also expressed his gratitude to the voters for showing their confidence in BN.

"Thank you for voting BN...this victory is the victory of the people in Gaya," said Liew to the thunderous applause from BN supporters.

Chief Minister Datuk Chong Kah Kiat also expressed his appreciation to the voters and his colleagues in BN, including leaders from the peninsular

who came to campaign in the by-election.

"My sincere thanks to all of you, to Umno national leadership, Umno Youth, Wanita Umno and Puteri Umno...thank you to all," said Chong, who is also Sabah BN chairman.

The Gaya seat fell vacant following the disqualification of Yong, who is SAPP president, after he was found to have committed an election offence in the 1999 state election.

-- BERNAMA

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