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BN triumph makes headlines abroad

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's win made world headlines.

From reports in newspapers, magazines to television and radio broadcasts all focused on the landslide victory.

The Barisan Nasional won 198 seats in the expanded Parliament and took control of all State Governments except Kelantan. BN also took more than four-fifths of the seats in the extended Parliament.

Many of the reports and broadcasts were focused on the losses sustained by Pas with emphasis on Abdullah's acceptable brand of Islam and his easy style.

Abdullah, who was widely seen by analysts as a transitional leader when he took over from former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, should be able to master his factional United Malays National Organisation (Umno) which dominates the coalition, according to Reuters.

"Big win gives Malaysia's Abdullah clear mandate," Reuters, the international news agency, said in its report which was carried in many newspapers around the globe.

"Asia doesn't have a lot of good news when it comes to the evolution of democracy (at the moment), but Malaysia is a piece of good news," Robert Broadfoot, managing director of the Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy, is quoted by AFP as saying.

The International Herald Tribune in its front-page story said: "One important constituency is already behind him (Abdullah): the international financial community."

With the world's focus on Islam and Muslim states, Malaysia's general election was obviously very closely watched. The question high in many minds was whether Pas, which had captured Terengganu from the Barisan Nasional in the 1999 election, in addition to Kelantan which it has ruled for 14 years, would make inroads into other areas.

An agency report said: "The fortunes of the Islamic party, which won control of the Terengganu state legislature four years ago, were being closely watched as a barometer of militant Islam in Southeast Asia."

Since taking control in Terengganu, the Islamic party, or Pas, has imposed religious laws, including bans on alcohol and gambling.

The Dallas Morning News said: "Malaysia routs Islamic Opposition" while The New York Times, in one of its reports, said: "Pas has been decimated." The Age, Australia and Toronto Star said: "Islamists routed in Malaysia vote."

Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat, Pas leader and Menteri Besar of Kelantan, seems to agree, "The moon has fallen..." he is quoted by AFP as saying in obvious reference to his party's emblem of a white moon on a green flag.

Another report in The New York Times said: "Malaysia's Islamic party loses ground in elections" while The Guardian in London quoting analysts said: "Pas' desire to turn Malaysia into an Islamist state, with punishments such as amputation and stoning, had been its undoing."

"Malaysia to stay secular," proclaimed the Detroit Free Press. The report said: "The election results were considered to be an endorsement of the open, largely secular policies of Abdullah, a lowkey leader known as a consensus builder."

The Asian Wall Street Journal and the London-based Financial Times had front-paged their stories on the elections.

Other headlines around the world read:

- * New premier of Malaysia gets mandate all his own - New York Times
- * Abdullah secures landslide victory in Malaysia - Financial Times
- * Malaysia rulers win in rout (with subhead: Electoral landslide backs leader's call for moderation) - Washington Post
- * Abdullah defeats Islamists in Malaysia poll - China Post
- * Unexpected landslide for Malaysia's Government - Radio Australia
- * Triumph for progressive vision of Malaysia - Straits Times, Singapore
- * BN wins two-thirds majority, Pas trounced - Straits Times interactive
- * Malaysian stocks advance after Abdullah wins landslide victory - Bloomberg
- * Malaysia polls: Prime Minister Badawi wins elections - GEO, World
- * Ruling coalition retains control in Malaysia - CBC News
- * PM Abdullah urges victorious BN candidates to work hard - Channel News Asia
- * Malaysian ruling coalition wins two-thirds majority in election - Xinhua
- * Malaysia to reap investment bonanza after landslide polls win: analysts - AFP

Meanwhile, congratulatory messages from leaders have also started to pour in with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, among the first to do so. Koizumi expressed a desire to further strengthen the friendly and close relations between the two countries.

Wen, in congratulating Abdullah on the win, expressed confidence that Malaysia will continue to score fresh achievements on its path to Vision 2020.