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Pas' boast of taking Kedah falls flat

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ALOR STAR, Sun. - Pas' boast of taking over the State sounded as hollow as a drum.

The conservative Islamic politicians met defeat in most of the state and parliamentary seats. One by one, Opposition politicians fell. First it was Pas' Mahfuz Omar, then it was his comrade Mohamad Sabu, then it was Parti Keadilan Nasional's Tian Chua and so on.

At Press time, it looked like BN had a two-thirds majority in the State Assembly.

The happiest person on the ground was Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Syed Razak Syed Zain. He has been in the hot seat since 1999, when the Opposition won 13 state seats and seven parliamentary seats.

He trounced Parti Keadilan Nasional's Saifuddin Nasution Ismail in the Kubang Rotan state seat.

BN leaders yesterday attributed their better showing to the Abdullah factor, noting that people in the State were impressed with the PM's first few months in office, his religious credentials and his humility.

His strategy of fielding a blend of old and new faces worked well. Among the newcomers who won was Datuk Dr Mashitah Ibrahim. She was the giant killer who slayed Pas strongman Taib Azimuddin for the Baling parliamentary seat.

In Kubang Pasu, Datuk Johari Baharom easily swept aside Dr Abdul Isa Ismail of Pas. His victory would have brought a smile on the face of Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad who owned that seat from 1974.

Johari, the Political Secretary to Abdullah, also served Dr Mahathir in that capacity for many years.

For Pas the defeat was a real shock. Party officials cancelled all functions last night, and state commissioner Aziz Abdul Razak conceded that he was shocked by the rejection his party suffered.

He managed to win the Sik parliamentary seat, defeating BN's Datuk Dr Wan Azmi Wan Ariffin. But he was second best in the Sungai Limau state seat.

Still it was scarce consolation for a man who believed that he would be leading the State Government.

Pas officials blamed the re-delineation of seats for their devastating defeat, but others said Pas officials had overestimated their strength.

They refused to acknowledge that their popularity in 1999 had much to do with the fallout in the Malay community over the sacking of former Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. They discounted the Abdullah factor.