

Pak Lah: We've learned our lesson
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Fauwaz Abdul Aziz

Barisan Nasional recognises that there are lessons to be learned from its dismal performance in last Saturday's general election and this will be reflected in government's future policies, said Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. MCPX

"We must learn from this. I have always believed there are lessons to learn. Even in the worst of tragedies, there are lessons to be learned.

abdullah ahmad badawi election announcement 130208 serious "I'm not a stubborn person who will not learn from lessons in life, even when these are associated with my career and my work," he told a press conference after back-to-back Umno supreme council and BN supreme council meetings today.

"We are all collectively responsible for all that we have been doing because the government has been making decisions on the basis of consensus," he added, apparently in response to calls for him to personally take responsibility for the ruling coalition's disastrous performance.

In Saturday's election, BN won only 140 of the 222 parliamentary seats. The opposition, led by PKR, won the remaining 82 with the Anwar Ibrahim-led party taking 31, DAP 28 and PAS 23.

The BN coalition's vote share in Peninsular Malaysia also suffered a blow when it won only 48.7 percent of the popular vote. In 2004, BN rode the wave with a 64 percent popular vote nationwide.

Independent body to do post-mortem

Abdullah said that an independent body will be set up by BN to do a post-mortem on the elections.

Nevertheless, he said, BN respects the decision of voters.

"The results of the election reflect the maturity of people in Malaysia as a democracy and for that, we accept the results (as pronounced) by the (Election Commission) EC," he said.

Among the issues that BN admits were factors that led to such results are corruption, inflation, and the rising crime rate, Abdullah conceded.

The reduced majority obtained by the coalition, however, will not hamper the BN government from continuing its development programmes.

"We have a fairly strong majority that is just short by eight (parliamentary) seats to secure the two-thirds majority. (But) it's not something that we are worried about. We can manage.

"I would certainly like to see Malaysia doing well under the Barisan Nasional despite the fact

that we don't have a two-thirds majority," he said.

On the fall of Malaysian stocks today by about 10 percent following the weekend's political upsets, Abdullah said he would like to assure all quarters that the government will not make any changes in policies that are detrimental to the economy.

"It is this Barisan Nasional government that was responsible for the growth of our economy, (and) for the prudent management of our finances. Whatever actions we have taken, all those policies that we have taken before - and (which have) worked well and welcomed by the private sector - will continue.

"It is not our intention to change. But if there are necessities to make changes by way of improving later on - and we would like to make some new policies - we assure that these policies will contribute to growth and will contribute to confidence in our economy. Our economy will continue to be private-sector friendly," he said.

Pak Lah: I 'pity' Khairy

To former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad's charges that his son-in-law, Khairy Jamaluddin, was the reason for BN's losses at the polls, Abdullah said this was not true.

"Khairy is not an influence on whatever I do. He is the deputy chief of Umno Youth. What we do is what we do...

He added that Khairy's suggestions do not necessarily become government's policies.

khairy jamaluddin interview 011107 talking "Anybody is free to give views and Khairy (right), like anybody else, speaks openly. He gives statements and opinions at the Umno general assembly. That's okay," he added.

Abdullah also said Khairy is not one to impose his views on him.

"This is the perception (and) it is the wrong perception. I (feel) pity for Khairy, and for the kind of perception he has or his role vis-a-vis his relationship with me as son-in-law and father-in-law."

Abdullah said no decisions on the line-up of the government's new ministerial cabinet had been made at the Umno and BN meetings today.

He also said BN will ensure that the government will represent all communities despite the loss of several key leaders from its component parties due to their defeat at the polls.

It is expected those who have lost will be appointed as senators which will allowed them to be appointed to the cabinet.

"The government of Barisan Nasional is a government for all Malaysians."