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Malaysia's Leader Calls For Unity

By JAMES HOOKWAY

PUTRAJAYA, Malaysia— Newly elected Prime Minister Najib Razak said he would press ahead with a multibillion-dollar modernization program for Malaysia's economy, adding that he hoped it would help reunite the Southeast Asian nation after the most fiercely contested election in its history.

Mr. Najib's National Front coalition secured around 60% of the seats in Sunday's ballot, but the vote was heavily split between Malaysia's thriving cities, which largely voted for opposition parties, and rural, mostly ethnic-Malay areas that threw their support behind Mr. Najib, the 59-year-old son of Malaysia's second prime minister.

Many of Malaysia's ethnic-Chinese minority, which makes up about a quarter of the population, also switched to opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's People's Alliance, leaving Mr. Najib's coalition ruling the country with 47% of the popular vote, compared with 50% for its opposition rivals, who allege that electoral fraud swung the result against them. The remaining 3% represented votes for independent candidates or spoiled ballots.

In his first remarks to the

international media following the election, Mr. Najib told The Wall Street Journal in an interview on Tuesday that expanding the size and scope of the country's economy would help draw support back to the National Front, which has run the country uninterrupted since independence from Britain in 1957.

"My next task is to harmonize the racial makeup of Malaysia," he said.

Mr. Najib had launched a series of economic and social overhauls before the election, rolling back parts of a decades-old affirmative-action program designed to raise incomes among the generally poorer ethnic-Malay majority. Now, he says, he aims to accelerate a \$444 billion plan in public and private outlays to help increase local consumer spending and make Malaysia more competitive against wealthier rivals such as South Korea and Singapore.

"There are those who will expect a bit more because they voted for you, but you still have to keep things in balance," Mr. Najib said.

His spending program, known locally as the Economic Transformation Plan, is a bid to drag Malaysia out of the so-called middle-income trap, which forces many

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