

KUALA LUMPUR: It has been a year of many firsts on the Malaysian political scene, with the 15th general election (GE15) culminating in the formation of an unprecedented unity government.

The snap polls on Nov 19 resulted in a hung Parliament, as for the first time since the general election of 1955, no party or coalition managed to win a simple majority to form a new government.

In GE15, which saw the voting age being lowered from 21 to 18 and the introduction of new voters through automatic voter registration, Pakatan Harapan (PH) won 82 seats, Perikatan Nasional (PN) had 74, Barisan Nasional (BN) clinched 30, Gabungan Parti Sarawak (GPS) secured 23, Gabungan Rakyat Sabah (GRS) took six, Parti Warisan (Warisan) achieved three, Parti Bangsa Malaysia (PBM) and Parti Kesejahteraan Demokratik Masyarakat (KDM) attained one each and two seats went to Independents.

Although already predicted by many analysts after Parliament was dissolved on Oct 10, the stalemate still nudged the country into uncharted territory and put the people on tenterhooks for five days, Bernama reported.

But the maturity of the country's democratic system came to the fore to resolve the political conundrum, and PH chairman Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim was sworn in as the 10th prime minister on Nov 24, thanks to the wisdom of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong Al-Sultan Abdullah Ri'ayatuddin Al-Mustafa Billah Shah.

Anwar thus realised his 24-year dream of assuming the country's top post.

His predecessor Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob had earlier signed a historic memorandum of understanding on transformation and political stability with then opposition PH on Sept 13, 2021, with the two sides agreeing not to have the general election until after July 31 this year.

After July, however, the political scene heated up again, with calls for snap polls being

Historic year in Malaysian politics

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➤ Appointment of Anwar as 10th PM welcomed as epitome of people's aspirations for healing of nation

opposed by PH, PN (BN's partner in the then government) and some Umno leaders.

Eventually, Umno's "Top 5" comprising party president Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, deputy president Datuk Seri Mohamad Hasan and vice-presidents Datuk Seri Mohamed Khalid Nordin, Datuk Seri Mahdzir Khalid and Ismail Sabri agreed to dissolve Parliament.

The polls also produced major upsets in the defeats of heavyweights such as former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, longest-serving MP Tengku Razaleigh Hamzah and several incumbent ministers.

But after the final seat tally was announced, political parties started scrambling to form a coalition government, with Anwar claiming on Nov 21 that he had secured a simple majority while PN chairman Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said he had submitted to Istana Negara the statutory declarations of 112 MPs who pledged support for PN.

The political turmoil forced the King to intervene, summoning Anwar, Muhyiddin and leaders of other coalitions to the Palace to help resolve the impasse so that the new government could be formed.

When His Majesty proposed that PN and PH form a unity government, Muhyiddin declined.

On Nov 24, Al-Sultan Abdullah held a special meeting with the Malay Rulers and on the same day, BN also decided to join a unity government led by PH, as decreed by His Majesty.

The King also announced the appointment of Anwar as the 10th prime minister on the same day.

Later that day, Anwar, who is also PKR president, was sworn in as the head of the unity government, which is supported by BN, GPS, Warisan, GRS, PBM, KDM and the Independent MPs.

Anwar's Cabinet also broke new ground and fulfilled his promise of having two deputy prime ministers - Ahmad Zahid and Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB) senior vice-president Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof, who is the first leader from Sabah or Sarawak to hold the number two post.

Anwar subsequently also won a vote of confidence as the new prime minister with a simple-majority voice support in the Dewan Rakyat on Dec 19.