

LANGKAWI STILL OWES A LOT TO DR M

Poor election machinery, PN wave contributed to his defeat in Langkawi

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BORN and raised in Langkawi, Razali Hussin (not his real name) is a staunch supporter of former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, although he does not belong to any political party.

Just like many other business operators on the resort island, Razali, in his 50s, has a lot to be grateful to Dr Mahathir, who turns 97 this July, for developing Langkawi into a popular duty-free tourism attraction.

"Most of the older generation here have a soft spot for Tun. We have utmost respect for what he has done to Langkawi.

"That was the main reason a majority of the votes supported Tun in 2018," he told the *New Straits Times*.

Razali was referring to the 14th General Election (GE14) results when the longest serving prime minister in Malaysia won the Langkawi parliamentary seat af-

ter making a comeback in active politics.

He won with a strong majority after securing 18,954 votes, defeating Barisan Nasional (BN) candidate, the late Datuk Nawawi Ahmad, and Pas candidate Zubir Ahmad.

The former Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) chairman, who contested under PKR ticket, was eventually appointed as the seventh prime minister.

However, his second stint in the premiership only lasted 22 months before he abruptly tendered his resignation in early 2020 following an internal power tussle in the then Pakatan Harapan government.

Dr Mahathir, together with his son, Datuk Seri Mukhriz Mahathir, and several other founding members of Bersatu then left to form Parti Pejuang Tanah Air (Pejuang).

"Prior to the election, Tun was overly dependent on his trusted men to serve the people in Langkawi.

"Many grouses raised by the



Former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad leaving the Perdana Leadership Foundation building in Putrajaya after finding out he failed to defend the Langkawi parliamentary seat in the 15th General Election. FILE PIC

people on the island were not properly attended to and addressed," said Razali.

As a non-partisan observer, Razali said he noticed that Pejuang's election machinery in Langkawi was unable to rival opponent parties' machinery in the campaign.

"They were unable to handle the onslaught of psychological warfare by opponents, while Tun was busy campaigning for Pejuang candidates nationwide."

"The Perikatan Nasional (PN) wave in Kedah was too strong, perhaps the voters felt that at his age, it was about time for him to retire from politics.

"It is such a great loss for Langkawi. I think Tun still has much to offer to Langkawi in term of ideas because he was responsible in developing this island," added Razali.

Langkawi Chinese Chamber of Commerce president Lee Han Eng said many Langkawi folk were still appreciative of Dr Mahathir's contribution to

the island.

"It was very shocking. We did not expect Tun to lose in Langkawi, let alone forfeit his deposit.

"I was born and raised in Langkawi. I still remember well how Langkawi has progressed after Tun declared it as a duty-free island in 1987.

"Without his ideas and contribution, we might not see Langkawi as it is today."

Lee said while young voters could have played some part in Dr Mahathir's defeat in the November GE15, the votes were split among the political parties.

"The votes were split between Tun's party, Barisan Nasional, Pakatan Harapan and PN but many had expected the real fight to be between Pejuang and BN."

He agreed with Razali that while many Langkawi folk still appreciate Dr Mahathir's deeds to the island, the political landscape has shifted significantly since GE14.

"Personally, I think he is still

capable of carrying out duties as a member of parliament, but many other voters, including the young ones, might feel it was time to make a change and give way to a new leader," added Lee.

In GE15, Dr Mahathir lost the Langkawi parliamentary seat after securing only 4,566 votes.

He was defeated by PN candidate Datuk Mohd Suhaimi Abdullah who won with a 13,518-vote majority in a five-cornered fight.

Dr Mahathir, who had returned to Langkawi for the first time since GE15 on Saturday, said he felt dejected by his disastrous performance in the polls.

However, he was adamant that he did not do anything wrong to the people of Langkawi and wished to know the reason for his defeat.

While stressing he was not sulking, the former premier admitted that the voters' rejection of him was a "little" upsetting despite his efforts to develop the island.