

Najib sworn in as PM
Malaysian Insider
May 6, 2013
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KUALA LUMPUR, May 6 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak has taken his oath of office as prime minister before Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah at the Istana Negara here today.

The Barisan Nasional (BN) chief had led his 13-party coalition to victory in yesterday's election, winning 133 seats out of 222 in the Dewan Rakyat but well-short of recovering the two-thirds supermajority they had been seeking as well as the popular vote.

Today's ceremony provides the stamp of legitimacy for Najib who rose to office on April 3, 2009 to replace Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi after Malaysia's fifth prime minister quit mid-stream following the ruling coalition's dismal showing in the 2008 general election.

But his contender for the prime ministership, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, is questioning the legitimacy of the BN mandate, which he claimed was obtained fraudulently in yesterday's polls and vowed to challenge the results.

"The fact that Pakatan Rakyat won the popular votes by a large margin (50.3 per cent, compared to BN's 46.8 per cent) confirms the mandate given to us and highlights that electoral frauds won the 13th general election for Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak," the opposition PKR advisor said in a statement.

"Our conscience cannot allow us to accept election results conjured through frauds and cheating. My heart is with every Malaysian who does not accept the results. I will work towards a national consensus to question the legitimacy of the BN's government achieved through such electoral frauds."

Election watchdog Bersih also said it will withhold recognition of BN's victory until they have verified reports of electoral fraud.

"Bersih is withholding recognition of the new government that will be formed until it has had the time to study the reports it has received," its co-chair, Datuk Ambiga Sreenevasan told a news conference in Petaling Jaya today.

Najib was reported to have sought an audience with the Agong earlier this morning, to form the next federal government after beating off the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) challenger by a simple majority. But the BN also failed to better its 140-seat win Election 2008.

Najib had retained his Pekan federal seat with a convincing 35,613-vote majority, polling 51,278 votes to PKR supreme council member Mohd Fariz Musa's 15,665 votes.

In Election 2008, Najib won Pekan with a 26,464-vote majority, beating PKR's Khairul Anuar Ahmad Zainudin when he polled 36,62 votes to the latter's 9,798 votes.

He recorded his appreciation to the voters and all Malaysians for returning the BN to power at the national level.

But Najib will likely have to make some hard calls to fill his administration after the BN lost

three Cabinet ministers. Tan Sri Bernard Dompok, Datuk Seri Kong Cho Ha and Senator Datuk Raja Nong Chik Zainal all failed to win their contests.

With the abandonment of the BN by the minority races at yesterday's polls, Najib's administration could well suffer a lopsided representation with Malays and Bumiputera looming large in the line-up and the Chinese voice absent.

MCA and Gerakan were practically wiped out in their areas of contest while the MIC managed to cling on to four federal seats nationwide.

Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek reiterated today his past promise that no MCA member will warm the Cabinet chairs after failing to improve on their 2008 score.

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Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/najib-sworn-in-as-pm/>