

## **Pakatan Harapan secures stunning victory ending 60-years of BN rule**

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**By Azman Ujang**

KUALA LUMPUR, (Bernama) -- The newly-formed Pakatan Harapan (PH) coalition of four opposition parties secured a stunning victory in Malaysia's just-concluded general election that ended over 60 years of uninterrupted rule by the Barisan Nasional (BN).

Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad at almost 93 years old achieved what virtually everyone thought was the impossible task of galvanising mass support against the once impregnable BN's grip on power which before today's historic defeat was the world's longest ruling political party.

Dr Mahathir is expected to be sworn in as Malaysia's seventh prime minister later today. Dr Mahathir was the fourth prime minister and ironically the same man who led the BN to victory in five successive general elections from 1982 to 1999.

When the final results were announced by Election Commission chairman Tan Sri Hashim Abdullah at around 4.45am , PH which fought what is billed as the mother of all elections using its affiliate Parti Keadilan Rakyat's (PKR) light blue eye symbol, won 113 out of 222 seats in Parliament for a simple majority.

It is expected to strengthen further its strength in Parliament with eight more seats that were won by Parti Warisan Sabah which had announced recently that it would go into a pact with PH at the federal level.

The BN led by caretaker Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak managed to win only 79 seats, a far cry from 132 that it had in the last Parliament seats.

Signs of a political tsunami or people's power began to emerge from around 10pm when the BN lost states like Melaka and Negeri Sembilan to PH while the Islamist PAS retained Kelantan with even bigger margins and got an unexpected bonus by winning Terengganu.



PH's component parties PKR and DAP retained Malaysia's industrial states of Selangor and Penang even more convincingly.

Two others - Perak and Kedah- saw keen tussles and ended up with a hung State Legislative Assembly each but how the political drama in these states would play out would become more apparent in the coming hours.

Even Sabah and Sarawak, long dubbed the BN's "fixed deposit" states for always delivering the Parliamentary seats to enable the BN to hold power in Putrajaya, the Federal administrative capital, crumbled under the sheer weight of a more discerning electorate with sizeable voters from Generation Y.

Sabah led by Chief Minister Tan Sri Musa Aman for the last 15 years at press time remained in a deadlock at the State Legislature level with BN winning 29 seats, Warisan 21, DAP and PKR (both in PH) with six and two respectively with another two seats won by Parti Solidariti Tanahairku.

Party officials said talks would be held later today to thrash out the stalemate on which party would get to form the new state government.

The opposition parties performed better in the battle for Parliamentary seats with Warisan winning eight, three each for DAP and PKR and one seat for Solidariti.

It was obvious that the once mighty BN's defeat was further fueled by the far-reaching influence that the opposition wielded over the social media bombarding it with issues of cost of living that has gone up hitting everybody's pocket after Najib introduced the 6% Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2014.

The BN's popularity shrank further in the last few years with the 1MDB debacle haunting Najib coupled with financial problems within Felda that unsettled the palm oil smallholders and lately the controversial legislations like the Anti-Fake News Act that was rushed through Parliament just before its dissolution on April 7.

Prime Minister-elect Dr Mahathir has vowed as the key promise in the PH election manifesto to abolish the GST if the party came to power with the same fate to await the Anti-Fake News law.

And in quick succession, too, just days before Malaysians went to the polls to decide their government for the next five years, Umno, the dominant party in BN, expelled prominent party veterans Tun Daim Zainuddin and Tan Sri Rafidah Aziz for campaigning in support of Dr Mahathir.

Two other veterans, Tan Sri Rais Yatim and Tan Sri Syed Hamid Albar have also joined the growing chorus for a change within the party that further eroded its support base especially among cross-sections of members who felt that there should be room for dissent in order to take Umno out of its comfort zone.

As many as six senior BN Cabinet ministers and two Menteri Besar were soundly defeated at the polls and this is unprecedented.

The casualties were Transport Minister and MCA President Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai, Health Minister and MIC President Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam, Plantation Industry and Commodities Minister Datuk Seri Mah Siew Keong, Agriculture and Agro-based Industry Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Shabery Cheek, Ministers in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom and Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Dahlan, Minister of Communications and Multimedia Datuk Seri Dr Salleh Said Keruak, Second Finance Minister Datuk Seri Johari Ghani, Johor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Khaled Nordin and Kedah Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Ahmad Bashah Md Hanipah.

The unheralded pace at which Pakatan Harapan swept into power in the wee hours of the morning as millions of Malaysians had to endure a sleepless night glued to their television or smartphones to follow the results of the election is nothing short of a miracle.

Malaysians at large couldn't help but be amazed by the sheer physical stamina of Dr

Mahathir himself as he crissed-crossed the country on his campaign trail despite his age, sending a clear message of his crusade to put right the many wrongs that he said were committed by the outgoing government.

It's almost 15 years ago that Dr Mahathir quit as prime minister after over two decades in office and the government to be formed shortly after his swearing-in certainly has a lot on its plate to usher in a whole new era for Malaysia.

For one thing, Malaysians who are so used to seeing a male dominated Cabinet and all too familiar faces at that will get a fresh one and to top it up, its first woman Deputy Prime Minister.

The PH election manifesto states that PKR President Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Ismail is slated as Dr Mahathir's deputy if the party came to power.

Rafidah Aziz, the former International Trade and Industry Minister otherwise known as Malaysia's Iron Lady, perhaps best sums up the sentiment of like-minded Malaysians who woke up this morning with a new dawn on the horizon.

She said: A new chapter in our history has started to be written. It is exactly 4.15am on this historic day, May 10, 2018.

I am too excited to sleep. I never imagined that I would live to see this day. The day the rakyat showed their wisdom in choosing a new government for the next five years, and registering so strongly their disdain and rejection of corruption, poor governance and abuse of authority.

She said the focus ought to be on putting the nation back on the right track and to bring back Malaysia to its glory days, including to rebuild its tarnished image and dignity.

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