



MAN OF THE MOMENT: Looking contented, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi makes his way to the Putrajaya Press conference hall. His gruelling campaigning schedule hardly seems to have taken its toll on him as he looks as sprightly as ever. Sunday's resounding win by the Barisan Nasional coalition seems to have erased all traces of fatigue and Abdullah looks well on the way to take the country to greater heights. — NST pictures by Abd Rahim Rahmat

Abdullah: Progressive Islam is the key

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PUTRAJAYA, Mon. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has attributed the Barisan Nasional's landslide win in Pas controlled areas to the people's preference for his Islam Hadhari, or progressive Islam.

He said Muslims were now aware of what the BN stood for and what it could do, and gave the coalition the mandate because they liked what they were seeing.

"Yes, we can say that they prefer what the BN has proposed and they like our plans. They like what we are trying to do, and perhaps they also like the way we are doing it," he told a Press conference at his residence here before heading for Istana Ne-

gara to be sworn in as Prime Minister after the overwhelming victory of the BN in Sunday's general election.

Asked about his immediate plans for Terengganu, which the BN recaptured from Pas, he quipped: "The immediate plan is to get the government established."

The issue of oil royalties was raised, but Abdullah said it would be dealt with when the time came.

"What's important is that the money is spent on (developing) Terengganu."

On Keadilan's loss in almost all the seats it contested except for Permatang Pauh which was won by its president Datin Seri Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, he said, it reflected the people's choice.

On whether long-serving ministers

in the Cabinet would be retained in the new line-up, Abdullah said it was more important that ministers were able to serve the country and enhance the Government's administration so the people could benefit.

Asked when he would announce the new Cabinet, he said he hoped to convene its first meeting next Wednesday.

"Give me a little bit of time. You don't expect me to come up with names so soon."

Abdullah said the BN's four-fifths share of parliamentary seats in the Dewan Rakyat would not hinder it from having a check and balance of power as MPs would be subjected to quarterly reviews of their performance.

"We have a mechanism (to do this), if they under-perform they will be

called up. MPs must work hard, distance themselves from corruption, guard their personal conduct and have high morals. They must be able to solve the people's problems, especially those in their constituencies."

He added that the Government would also consult civil society groups for their views.

With the appointments of Menteris Besar and Chief Ministers as another hot issue following the polls, Abdullah issued a stern order to all parties not to speculate on who would get posts.

"This is an instruction. I don't want any speculation on MBs. I'm going to make a statement by the end of this week and we hope to have all MBs sworn in by then."

On the BN's landslide victory, Abdullah added that he felt "humbled" by the huge mandate Malay-

sians have given him.

"I'm thinking of nothing else at the moment except that there's going to be more and more work to be carried out. The mandate they have entrusted to me is heavy. My first duty as Prime Minister is to ensure that it is fulfilled."

On views that his "Mr Clean" image and religious background were factors that helped the BN win by a huge majority, Abdullah said: "Alhamdulillah. I try to improve myself. There are also others who look after me, reminding me when I go wrong."

Asked about the BN's sweep of the Putrajaya parliamentary seat by a 3,546 vote margin, he said he had no worries about how civil servants would choose and dismissed the "fear factor" which the Opposition claimed prevented government staff from

voting freely.

"During this campaign period, I didn't even have one campaign activity for Putrajaya," he said.

On the poor management of the polls in certain seats by the Election Commission, Abdullah said he was concerned about what happened and wanted an explanation.

Abdullah showed reporters a silver-coloured Mont Blanc pen which his late mother had given him. "Whenever I use it, I remember her," he said.

Abdullah also spoke briefly about his wife Datuk Seri Endon Mahmood.

"She's my number one supporter. Nobody can do what she can do. She will call me daily, even when she is in the US for treatment, just to ask about what I wear and what I eat."