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29 killed in Malaysia

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KUALA LUMPUR, DEC. 26. At least 29 people, including foreign tourists, were killed on Sunday after being swept away by tidal waves on a Malaysian resort island and in other areas, Government officials and police said.

Many of the victims drowned while swimming and riding jet skis near beaches on the Penang island in northwestern Malaysia, the Deputy Prime Minister, Najib Razak, told a news conference. Others died on the mainland state of Kedah.

At least 111 others received treatment for injuries, while dozens were reported missing. "This is a disaster that our country has never faced before in history," Mr. Najib said.

More than 1,000 homes across numerous fishing villages were destroyed as waves roared into the coastline, leaving hundreds

of families homeless, disaster officials said.

"I have ordered precautionary measures to shift people to safer areas," Mr. Najib said. "It is possible there might be more tidal waves. We should be ready if there is another round."

Waves as high as 5 meters (16 feet) hit Penang and several other Malaysian islands following the 8.9-magnitude earthquake earlier on Sunday near Indonesia's Sumatra island, said Low Kong Chiew, director of the state-run Seismological Division.

A narrow strait separates peninsular Malaysia's western coast from Sumatra.

Officials received reports that some vessels capsized at sea, Mr. Low said. Flash floods hit popular beach resorts packed with Western and local tourists celebrating the Christmas weekend. — AP

27 DEC 2004

THE HINDU

Anwar barred from politics for some time

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, SEPT. 2. Malaysia's former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, was today set free from prison after the Federal court in Putrajaya set aside his conviction in the "sodomy case" against him.

Once a leading political dissident, Mr. Anwar thanked the judges for annulling his sentence, and later told reporters that he would "give credit" to the Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, and "remain committed" to the "struggle for justice."

'Healing process'

Today's 2-1 majority judgment is seen in South East Asian political circles as a window of

opportunity for a "healing process" in Malaysia, where Mr. Abdullah Badawi is said to have let the law take its course in a politically sensitive case.

Mr. Anwar can resume his political career only after the end of a mandatory period of ineligibility, said Karim Raslan, a Malaysian lawyer and political commentator.

The period of Mr. Anwar's political disqualification starts from the date of completion of his prison term awarded for his "corrupt practices" while in office.

The ruling by the apex court applies only to the "sodomy case." Mr. Anwar has already served his sentence in the "corruption case", in which he lost all appeals. The period Mr. An-

war spent behind bars in the last case, as well as that in the partially reduced sentence for the "corruption case", will be factors deciding his period of political disqualification.

Mr. Anwar was removed from office in 1998 by the then Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, before being tried for alleged corrupt practices.

Convicted and sentenced in April 1999, he was thereafter tried and sentenced in the "sodomy case". Malaysia's Court of Appeal rejected his petition in the second case in April 2003.

Not proven

Upholding a follow-up appeal, the Federal court today ruled that the allegations against Mr. Anwar and his

adopted brother, Sukma Darmawan, were not proven beyond reasonable doubt. The two were accused of committing 'sodomy' by Mr. Anwar's family chauffeur, Azizan Abu Bakr, at Mr. Sukma's apartment, between January and March 1993.

Repealing Mr. Anwar's sentence of a nine-year jail-term and Mr. Sukma's punishment of a six-year prison term, the Federal court's panel of three judges held, by a majority ruling, that Mr. Sukma's 'confession' was not admissible as evidence.

The judge, Abdul Hamid Mohamad, said Mr. Sukma made his 'confession' after being detained for 12 days and interrogated for 10 days.

The actual date of the alleged offence was also open to doubt.

Mahathir framed Anwar, court told

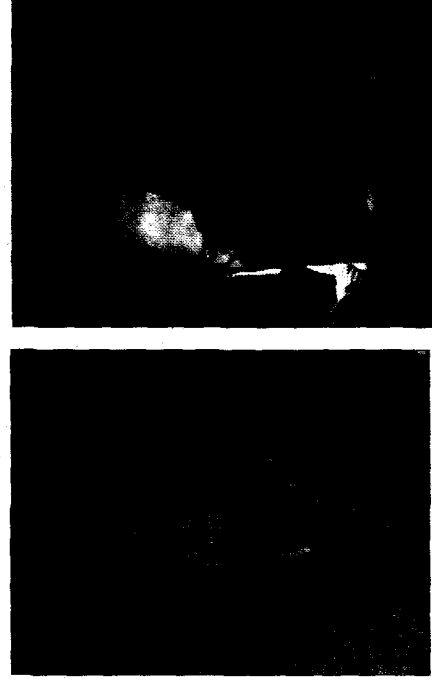
Agence France Presse

KUALA LUMPUR, May 12. — Ex-Malaysian Prime Minister Mr Mahathir Mohamad headed a conspiracy to destroy his deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, the country's highest court was told today in Anwar's final appeal against a sodomy conviction.

Lawyer Mr Christopher Fernando alleged in the Federal Court that the conspiracy involved Mr Mahathir Mohamad, trade minister Mr Rafidah Aziz, former finance minister Mr Daim Zaimuddin and Mr Aziz Shamsuddin, a former Mahathir aide who is now a

minister. Anwar's lawyers say the corruption and sodomy charges against Anwar were fabricated to prevent him from challenging Mr Mahathir Mohamad politically.

"These were trumped up charges to destroy one of Malaysia's illustrious sons," Mr Fernando said. "They went to enormous lengths." The three appeal judges were told that attempts by the defence at Anwar's original trial to force Mr Mahathir Mohamad and others to testify had been refused by the court, which "went out of the way to pro-



Mr Mahathir Mohamad (left) and Mr Anwar Ibrahim

tect the Prime Minister". Mr Fernando had earlier caused attorney-general Mr Ghani Patail to storm out of the courtroom after he accused him of being part of the

conspiracy as lead prosecutor in the trial in August 2000.

"There was a high-level conspiracy in place to procure and use fabricated evidence. The gathering of fabricated evidence included the current attorney-general," Mr Fernando said.

Mr Mahathir Mohamad sacked his charismatic and popular deputy in 1998. The following year he was jailed for six years for corruption and handed a nine-year term in 2000 for sodomy. He has already served five years, having completed his sentence for corruption and begun his nine-year sodomy term.

MR-A Malaysia chooses its best bet 25/3

THE MALAYSIAN coalition government's landslide victory is much more than an endorsement of Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi. The electorate plumped for Mr Badawi not only as a good successor to former premier Mahathir Mohammad, but also as the best bet to end the widespread corruption in government and to win back trading partners like the US and Australia.

Despite Mr Mohammad's unstinting support for the war on terror, he remained one of the highest profile Islamic critics of the US-led invasion on Afghanistan and Iraq. But the country's image changed since 9/11 when it came to light that Malaysia was a meeting venue for al-Qaeda plotters, and a key haven for terror groups. Recent months put Malaysia in an even more embarrassing light, when a company controlled by Mr Badawi's son was identified as an unwitting conduit for the net-

work that trafficked in Pakistan's nuclear secrets.

The country's rapid development and multi-ethnic relations has made it some kind of a poster child for moderate Islam. That image will now get a makeover with the complete rout of the opposition Pan-Malaysia Islamic Party (PAS) at the recent hustings. Malaysians obviously would have none of PAS's long-term agenda: to turn the country into a hard-line Islamic State. The fundamentalist party's focus on imposing strict Islamic laws seems to have raised too many uncomfortable questions about its commitment to democracy and racial equality for the Malaysian voter. Its fortunes are, in a sense, a barometer of the spread — or otherwise — of militant Islam in Southeast Asia, and this is significant as Indonesia, the most populous Muslim country, holds its parliamentary elections early next month.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES 25 MAR 2004

S. S. Anwar
Mohamad

A RESOUNDING VICTORY

M.D.-10
25/3 ✓

THE MALAYSIAN PRIME Minister, Abdullah Ahmed Badawi, could not have asked for anything better. In Sunday's snap general election, the voters have handed him an overwhelming mandate, giving his National Front coalition 198 of the 219 seats in Parliament. More significant than this unprecedented majority for a leader who assumed the mantle only last October from a towering personality like Mahathir Mohamad, Mr. Badawi has succeeded in crushing the fundamentalist Islamic opposition Parti Islam Se-Malaysia (PAS). Its tally has been reduced to seven from 27 in the dissolved House. It is heartening that in the present complicated international situation, the Malaysian people have emphatically rejected the PAS and opted to stay with the secular Barisan Nasional or the National Front. With the Anwar Ibrahim episode only a hazy memory, his wife has just managed to retain her seat in Parliament. The verdict can be seen not only as a personal mandate for the new Prime Minister, who has stepped out of the shadow of his mentor, Dr. Mahathir, but also as a clear signal from one of South-East Asia's Tiger economies to stay on the course of economic recovery and not fall into the trap of religious fundamentalism, which was trying to make inroads in the region.

Now that Mr. Badawi has been sworn in as Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister and very much as his own man, he has his task cut out. He has had enough opportunity in the past five months to spell out his priorities and plan of action. Not surprisingly, he has championed the path of growth and development — a course his predecessor laid and shaped for over two decades. Without hurting dominant Malay Muslim sentiments, Mr. Badawi has advocated "Islamic governance," not an "Islamic State" that the PAS

stands for. The economy remains his focus. Considering that Mr. Badawi brings with him rich experience as Malaysia's Foreign Minister, he should know what the region and the world expect from him and his government. He has to smoothen bilateral ties with his immediate neighbours, particularly Singapore, and take a leading role in guiding the policies and economic integration of South-East Asia's regional grouping, ASEAN. He also needs to build on the bridges Dr. Mahathir laid with the two Asian giants, China and India.

On the domestic front, Mr. Badawi has a great deal to do. His fight against corruption and cronyism is bound to face formidable resistance. Even if vested interests would like to divert his attention from a political reform agenda, he will derive immense strength from the fact that people have voted for change with continuity — change in certain aspects of governance and continuity with the strategic coalition path worked out. The minority Chinese and ethnic Indians, who form part of the ruling coalition, will be enthused by the magnitude and quality of the mandate. Had the PAS been returned with enhanced representation in Parliament, it could have created new tensions in the multi-racial fabric. The party has lost control of the Terengganu province and has just managed to hold on to power in Kelantan, with a wafer-thin majority. Mr. Badawi must build on this harmony and make a strategic shift from the 'Bumiputra' concept to one of all-round development. The Prime Minister has promised to decide on his new Cabinet next week, after a meeting with his old team. He needs to put together a mix of experienced and new faces to build on the edifice created by his predecessor.



Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi. (AFP)

Economy before religion for Malaysia

Kuala Lumpur, March 22 (Reuters): Glad Mahathir Mohamad finally quit, Malaysia's Muslim majority gave his successor a stunning election victory, abandoning a dalliance with political Islam for hopes of clean government and economic progress.

Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's success will help wash away fears that the increasing religiosity of Muslim Malays could be channelled into radicalism and extremism.

Tough on militants, Malaysia has bridled at western perceptions of it as a risky place in a world running scared following al Qaida's attacks on the US on September 11, 2001.

"Ever since 9/11, they've portrayed Malaysia as a moderate Muslim country. This election shows it," commented Bridget Welsh, an expert on Southeast Asia from Johns Hopkins University in Washington, who came to follow the election first hand.

The moderates secured their victory in a way that prompted criticism from the fundamentalists and other Opposition groups.

"This election has been unfair. We were not given any chance through the media, through anything," said Abdul Hadi Awang, leader of the main Islamic Opposition Parti Islam se-Malaysia, as he conceded defeat as chief minister of Terengganu state.

Mainstream media are uniformly pro-government, the election campaign lasted just a week and the creation of new seats and constituency boundary changes all favoured the ruling Barisan Nasional alliance and its leading force, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO).

For all that, analysts say, the scale of the rout leaves little doubt that Abdullah is the leader the Muslim Malays and Malaysia's other races want.

It marked a rejection of the conservative social agenda and weak economic policies of PAS, left clinging to power in just one of Malaysia's 13 states, analysts said.

The inward-looking Malays were less bothered by outsiders' assumptions equating conservative Islam with militancy, and the vote for Abdullah was more to do with his vision of the faith than sensitivity over how foreigners view them, analysts said.

Countries in the region will be relieved that the Islamists have been put to flight.

Neighbouring Singapore, the rich, mostly Chinese island state that was part of Malaysia until 1965, will no doubt be pleased about the election outcome.

The island state, with a sizeable Muslim minority, smashed a militant Islamic cell in late 2001 that had planned to bomb western embassies and other targets.

THE TELE

2002

Badawi sworn in as PM



Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (centre) and other National Front coalition leaders celebrate their win in the 11th general elections in Kuala Lumpur. — AFP

Star/ANN & AP

KUALA LUMPUR, March 22. — Secular-minded incumbent Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was sworn in today as Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister, one day after scoring a landslide election victory that handed the fundamentalist Islamic Opposition its worst defeat in more than a decade.

Mr Badawi, dressed in a somber black tunic and traditional gold-embroidered

cloth wrapped around his waist, took the oath of office before king Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail at the national palace, where he swore to "fulfill the obligations of this post with honesty and with all my strength".

"I will be loyal to Malaysia and protect and defend the Constitution," Mr Badawi pledged.

The ceremony was attended by dozens of top officials including former longtime leader Mr Maha-

thir Mohamad who handed power to Mr Badawi five months ago and retired.

Shortly afterward, the Election Commission awarded the last prize at stake — the Assembly in the northern state of Kelantan — to the Islamic party after a daylong recount.

Retaining the assembly was the only pride the party could salvage, however, after a sweeping defeat by Mr Badawi's secular National Front.

Abdullah Badawi sworn in

KUALA LUMPUR, MARCH 22. Abdullah Ahmad Badawi was sworn in on Monday as Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister, one day after scoring a landslide election victory that handed the fundamentalist Islamic Opposition its worst defeat in more than a decade.

Mr. Abdullah, dressed in a sombre black tunic and traditional gold-embroidered cloth wrapped around his waist, took the oath of office before King Syed Sirajuddin Syed Putra Jamalullail at the national palace, where he swore to "fulfill the obligations of this post with honesty and with all my strength". "I will be loyal to Malaysia and protect and defend the Constitution," Mr. Abdullah pledged.

The ceremony was attended by dozens of top officials including the former longtime leader, Mahathir Mohamad. Shortly afterwards, the Election Commission awarded the last prize at stake — the Assembly in the northern state of Kelantan — to the Islamic party with a narrow three-seat majority after a daylong recount, said the Commission spokesman, Shamsudin Daud.

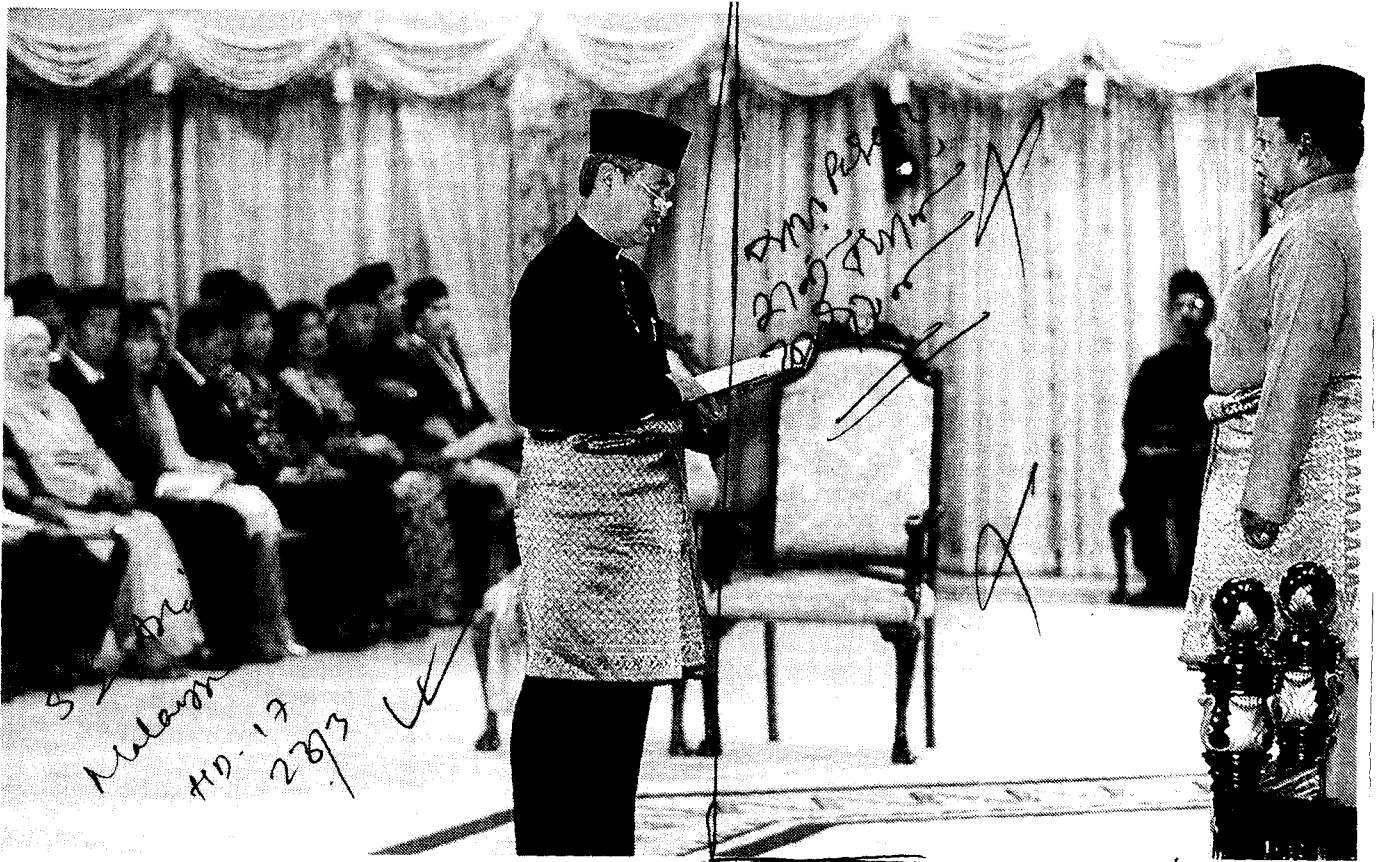
The Opposition leaders blamed the short eight-day campaign, a shutout by the government-controlled mainstream media, alleged bias by the Election Commission and dirty tricks at polling booths for their losses.

Anwar's wife wins

In a separate recount, Azizah Ismail, wife of the jailed former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim, regained her Parliament seat after initial election results dealt her a 36-vote loss.

Ms. Azizah, leader of the People's Justice Party, became the only one of five party members to be returned to Parliament. She stood in Mr. Anwar's former constituency, which she first won in 1999 after he was jailed.

Allied with Ms. Azizah's party, the Islamic party tripled its parliamentary seats and captured Terengganu in 1999. — AP



The Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi (centre), being sworn in by King Syed Sirajuddin at the national palace in Kuala Lumpur on Monday. — AFP

Abdullah emerges from mentor's shadow

By P. S. Suryanarayana

SINGAPORE, MARCH 22. The landslide victory that Malaysia's ruling coalition won in Sunday's general election has placed the Prime Minister, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, on the upward trajectory as a leader to reckon with in South East Asia.

Crafting nearly a clean sweep of all the seats in the eleventh Parliament of 219 members, Mr. Abdullah has decisively emerged from the political shadow of his towering mentor and former Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad. The governing alliance — Barisan Nasional (BN) — secured 195 of 213 seats for which results were announced by this morning.

A view in the political circles of Malaysia and the wider region is that Mr. Abdullah has given the religion-based "fun-

damentalist party" — the Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS) — such a drubbing that its reverberations can be of greater importance than might be immediately evident. The PAS claimed that it would remain a political force, despite its crushing defeat that nullified its potential as a factor in the parliamentary politics.

Political observers, puzzled at the sheer magnitude of the Islamist party's defeat, sought to trace the genesis of Mr. Abdullah's triumph to his political credentials. Cited in this context were his ability to project himself as a possible custodian of the cause of Islam in the diverse Malaysian society that harbours a Muslim majority. To this extent, he was perceivably able to erode the claims of the PAS as the sole possible champion of the Islamic cause. This aspect of

Mr. Abdullah's politics was talked about even before Sunday's general election. The PAS had troubled the BN in the previous general election in 1999, and the coalition's overall victory, under Dr. Mahathir, was considered an escape towards the sunlight.

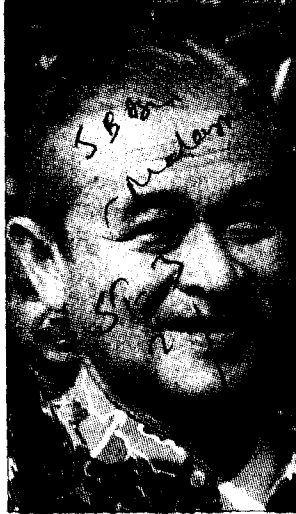
One other key factor being cited for Mr. Abdullah's success is his own image as a new face for the Prime Minister's post. He has been in power for just a few months since Dr. Mahathir's retirement.

While the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the largest constituent of the BN, stole the show, the other parties in the coalition, which represent the minority communities of local Chinese and ethnic Indians, reaped the gains of a merry band-wagon ride that Mr. Abdullah's 'leadership'

made possible.

However, an observer's view is that the BN may now need to stay aware of the pitfalls of any "hegemonic politics" that the poll victory could cause. The UMNO has regained, in terms of electoral politics, the hearts and minds of the Malay community, which got divided over the imprisonment of the former Deputy Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim. This may leave the minority parties within the BN with a qualitatively new challenge of preserving the political space of the local Chinese and ethnic Indians. The BN's traditional political agenda, as shaped during Dr. Mahathir's long reign, included multiracial coexistence on the basis of Malay predominance and the promotion of moderate Islam in a diverse society besides economic growth.

Malaysian PM's party set to win polls



Prime Minister Badawi.

KUALA LUMPUR, March 21. — Malaysia's ruling secular coalition was headed for almost certain victory in elections today, but Islamic fundamentalists predicted big gains in the struggle for the votes of the Muslim majority.

With ethnic Chinese and Indian voters are holding the balance of power, Prime Minister Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's National Front expects to win big nationally but fears a slide towards the Islamists could shake the country and rattle foreign investors.

Mr Badawi campaigned hard in the rural Muslim heartland in the north, desperate to woo voters away from the fundamentalist Opposition to what he calls "modern and progressive" Islamic rule.

While the Opposition has promised heaven as a reward for its supporters and castigates the government as corrupt, Mr Badawi has offered modern Islamic rule which protects the rights of non-believers.

After voting in his home state of Penang today, Mr Badawi predicted the National Front would reverse the losses it suffered at the hands of the Islamic hardliners in the last elections in 1999. — AFP

Iraq a blunder, Kerry might make world safer'

Associated Press

PUTRAJAYA, March 18.
— Former Malaysian prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said the world might be safer if US president Mr George W Bush



Dr Mahathir

loses to John Kerry in November's US polls, since the Democratic challenger seems more willing to heed the views of other countries.

Dr Mahathir said the 11 March bombings in Spain showed that Bush's determination to invade Iraq a year ago has aggravated international terrorism and heightened hostility toward US and its allies. "The anger is greater now," he said.

Asked whether the world would be safer if Bush is toppled in November's presidential elections, he said: "Could be... I think Kerry would be much more willing to listen to the voices of people and of the rest of the world."

The USA asked Malaysia to halt a shipment of suspected nuclear parts years before a local firm was linked to a network that supplied Libya, Iran and North Korea with weapons-making technology, he said. Malaysia stopped one shipment years ago of stainless steel pipes at Washington's request. "We didn't know where they were headed," Dr Mahathir said. "They didn't say if it was for centrifuges. There were some reports submitted to me, saying that there was this American objection. They said it was meant for some nuclear thing." The seizure is believed to have occurred in the 1990s.

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ELECTIONS IN MALAYSIA

S. S. Anwar ✓

THE DECISION BY Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmed Badawi of Malaysia to dissolve Parliament and call elections nine months ahead of schedule reflects his determination to win his own mandate and emerge from the towering shadow of Mahathir Mohammed. Mr. Badawi was anointed by Mr. Mohammed to succeed him when he stepped down from the premiership of Malaysia last October after 23 years at the helm. Under Mr. Mahathir, Malaysia transformed itself from a cash crop-and-mining economy into a modern, industrial powerhouse and one of Asia's most developed societies. In the four months since taking over the reins of Malaysia, Mr. Badawi has made it clear that while building on Mr. Mahathir's legacy, he will address some of the weaknesses of the system he has inherited, the most entrenched of which are corruption and cronyism. His first steps in this direction — the arrest of a Minister on corruption charges, the cancellation of a big contract to a prominent businessman, and the introduction of competitive bidding for contracts — have sent shock waves through Malaysia and at the same time raised expectations that he will initiate a major reform. Mr. Badawi also wants to shift the focus of development from urban Malaysia to the rural hinterland. He has wisely decided to strengthen his hands with a people's mandate.

There is not the slightest doubt that Mr. Badawi's United Malays National Organisation, and the ruling National Front coalition of which it is the main constituent, will win this election. The main challenge for Mr. Badawi, however, is to prevent the Parti Islam se Malaysia (PAS), the main Opposition party, from making any major gains. The fight between the two parties is for the Malay vote. Malays constitute about 60 per

cent of the country's 25 million people and are almost entirely Muslim. The PAS has declared it wants to turn Malaysia into an Islamic state. In the last election held in 1999, soon after Mr. Mahathir sacked and imprisoned his then deputy, Anwar Ibrahim, the PAS managed to wean a significant proportion of Malays to its side. But the PAS may find the coming contest tougher. The Anwar Ibrahim episode, which caused bitter divisions among Malays four years ago, has faded from the public mind. The economic crisis that loomed over South-East Asia five years ago has been resolved and the Malaysian economy, one of the first to bounce back, is humming along. With his understated and non-confrontational style of politics, Mr. Mahathir's successor enjoys considerable personal popularity. As for his religious credentials, Mr. Badawi is a reputed Islamic scholar. Goaded recently by the PAS to make public his stand on the *sharia*, he set out his vision for Malaysia as "Islamic hadhari" or Islamic governance, describing this as "working hard, hunger for knowledge and information in science and technology," all aimed at the economic development of the country.

The UMNO has the support of the Chinese and Indian ethnic minorities, who together constitute about 40 per cent of the population and who fear the PAS and its vision of an Islamic theocracy. Even so, any significant drop in support for UMNO among Malays could set off challenges to Mr. Badawi's leadership of his party, and, as the leader of the party is also the Prime Minister, to his stewardship of the country. In the last elections, the ruling coalition had a two-thirds majority in parliament. Mr. Badawi is on test for a similar result this time. In this sense, the most important aspect of this election will be the scale of Mr. Badawi's victory.

Malaysia PM counters Opp threat with 'God's will'

Associated Press

KUALA LUMPUR, March 10. — Prime Minister Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi is firing back at the Islamic fundamentalist Opposition for telling voters that choosing the incumbent government in elections this month could send them to hell.

"The hereafter is the promise of God," Mr Abdullah told a rally of about 10,000 supporters. "It is up to God. We can only work to become good Muslims."

Religion has emerged as the main battleground in the 21

March elections after the spiritual leader of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, or PAS, said Muslims who voted for his party would go to heaven, while those who didn't would go to hell.

Mr Abdullah's United Malays National Organization, which leads a secular multi-ethnic coalition, and PAS have battled for years over support from Malay Muslims, who make up the majority of this Southeast Asian nation's 25 million people. Ethnic Indians and Chinese make up sizable minorities.

Religion and ethnicity are the most volatile issues in multi-cultural Malaysia, contributing to race riots 30 years ago that still resonate.

At a news conference yesterday, Mr Abdullah warned that the fundamentalists were leading the Malay Muslim voters into a trap. "Muslims are easily motivated by religious arguments, including what PAS is telling them," Mr Abdullah remarked. "These are things we have to understand. Otherwise, the Malays may be falling into what PAS wants. Then, we will

have some problems." Opposition officials have accused Mr Abdullah of preaching Islamic virtue only when it suits him.

Mr Abdullah, who took over from former Prime Minister Mr Mahathir Mohamad in October, has Islamic credentials that many think make him better suited to checking the fundamentalists' influence. He has adopted a less confrontational approach than the combative Mr Mahathir, encouraging Muslims to adopt a more moderate form of Islam.

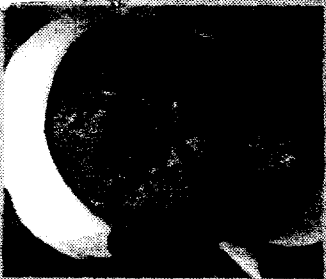
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'Only Muslim PMs to be allowed'

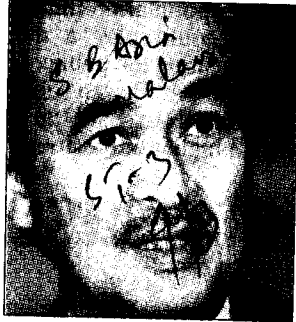
KUALA LUMPUR, March 10. — Malaysian Opposition leader Mr Abdul Hadi Awang wants the federal Constitution should be amended to allow only a Muslim to become Prime Minister of the country.

He said a Chinese could also hold the post provided he was a Muslim as this was allowed under the principles of an Islamic state. "Some European countries only allow Catholics or Protestants to become president of the country," he told newsmen after chairing the state Exco meeting. — Star/ANN



Mr Abdul Hadi Awang

Malaysia PM dissolves parliament



Mr Badawi: First electoral test

Star/Asia News Network

PUTRAJAYA, March 3.
— Prime Minister Mr Abdullah Ahmad Badawi today announced the dissolution of parliament effective from tomorrow (Thursday), paving the way for the country's 11th general elections.

He said the King had consented to the dissolution of the 10th parliament as provided for under Article 55 of the Federal Constitution. "The King signed the dissolution declaration today and all states, except Sarawak, will be advised to act accordingly and to dissolve their respective state assemblies. The state Assemblies should be dissolved the same day as parliament."

He said the Election Commission would decide on the polling dates. Once parliament is dissolved by the King on the advice of the Prime Minister, the EC will take over to set the polling dates. The whole process must be completed within 60 days.