

Morocco's King Mohammed VI appointed Fatima Ezzahra El Mansouri as prime minister on Tuesday, making her the country's first woman to hold the post after her centrist party won the largest number of seats in last week's parliamentary election.

El Mansouri, 50, is a senior figure in the Authenticity and Modernity Party (PAM), which won 97 of the 395 seats in the House of Representatives in the Sept. 23 election. Her appointment was announced by the royal palace.

Her appointment makes her the second woman to head a government in the Arab world, after Tunisia's Najla Bouden, who served as prime minister from 2021 to 2023.

El Mansouri now faces the task of forming a coalition because PAM is well short of the 198 seats required for a majority. The National Rally of Independents (RNI) won 66 seats, Istiqlal 65 and the Justice and Development Party (PJD) 54.

The PJD has said it will remain in opposition, complicating the coalition arithmetic for El Mansouri. PAM had previously been part of the outgoing government coalition led by RNI, but relations between the two parties have deteriorated.

El Mansouri is a lawyer who studied at Mohammed V University in Rabat before continuing her education in France and the United States. She became the first woman to serve as mayor of Marrakech in 2009 and returned to the post after the 2021 elections. She has also served as minister responsible for national planning, urban planning, housing and city policy.

The new government will oversee major investment programmes as Morocco prepares to co-host the 2030 FIFA World Cup with Spain and Portugal. It will also face pressure over jobs, public services and economic conditions.

Morocco is a constitutional monarchy in which the king retains substantial powers, including key responsibilities in areas such as defence and foreign affairs. Under the constitution, the monarch appoints the head of government from the party that wins the most seats in parliamentary elections.