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BN gets two-thirds majority mandate (HL)

THE Barisan Nasional (BN) swept to victory in the 10th general elections this morning with more than the targeted two-thirds majority in Parliament. Along the way the 14-member coalition claimed the scalp of Opposition leader Lim Kit Siang but lost another state to Pas in the state elections.

BN secured the two-thirds majority of 129 seats at 2.45am, and went on to post a final tally of 141 seats with 44 seats going to the Opposition. DAP suffered heavy blows with its stalwarts, secretary-general Lim, a 30-year member of Parliament, losing both the state and parliamentary contests, as did its vice chairman Karpal Singh.

Speaking at a packed press conference at the Putra World Trade Centre immediately after the two-thirds majority was achieved, Prime Minister and BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the party will make good its promise of keeping the country free, united and successful.

"Unfortunately, we lost two states to the Opposition but we will win them back the next time. We accept it (the loss) as we are a democratic country. In an election, it is possible to lose as much as you can win," he said.

BN remains the party of choice, he added.

The Election Commission estimated that 70 per cent of voters cast their ballots. A total of 9,564,071 Malaysians were eligible to vote yesterday. A total of 6,931 polling centres were set up throughout the country, with those in the peninsula opening between 8.00am and 5.30pm, and in Sabah and Sarawak between 7.30am and 5.00pm. However, some polling stations in the remote areas of Sabah and Sarawak closed earlier.

A total of 425 candidates from 32 political parties vied for 193 parliamentary seats while another 811 candidates contested for 393 state seats. The first results were announced at 7.53pm with BN candidate Datuk Peter Tinggom retaining his Saratok seat in Sarawak. Tinggom is Deputy Minister of National Unity and Social Development.

At 8.13pm, the Opposition won its first parliamentary seat when PBS' Dr Maximus Ongkili won the Bandau constituency.

Dr Mahathir, who contested in the Kubang Pasu constituency in Kedah, defeated Pas candidate Subky Latif with a majority of 10,138. He polled a total of 22,399 votes against Subky's 12,261. Dr Mahathir has been the member of Parliament for the constituency since 1974.

His deputy, Datuk Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, in a straight fight with Encik Abdul Khalid Rasip of Pas, was returned to the Kepala Batas seat with a majority of 11,175. He polled 19,985 votes against Abdul Khalid's 8,810. First Finance Minister Tun Daim Zainuddin (Merbok), Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik (Labis), Works Minister Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu (Sungai Siput) and Primary Industries Minister Datuk Seri Dr Lim Keng Yaik (Beruas) also successfully defended their respective parliamentary seats.

The biggest upset is probably the defeat of Terengganu Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad to Pas candidate Awang Jusoh by only 436 votes. Awang polled 6,564 votes against Wan Mokhtar's 6,128.

Four Cabinet ministers also failed to secure a mandate. They are Second Finance Minister Datuk Mustapa Mohamed and Rural Development Minister Datuk Annuar Musa in Kelantan, Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Minister Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayob in Perak and Minister in the

Prime Minister's Department Datuk Dr Abdul Hamid Othman in Kedah. Other notable BN casualties were Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Paduka Ibrahim Ali in Kelantan and Deputy Agriculture Minister Datuk Tengku Mahmud Mansor, Deputy Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Abu Bakar Daud and Deputy Entrepreneur Development Minister Datuk Idris Jusoh in Terengganu. Meanwhile, Parti Keadilan Nasional president Datin Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail won the Permatang Pauh seat by garnering 23,820 votes against BN's Datuk Dr Ibrahim Saad who polled 14,743 votes. Permatang Pauh was the constituency of her husband, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. Kelantan Menteri Besar Datuk Nik Abdul Aziz Nik Mat of Pas won the Chempaka state seat and its president Datuk Fadzil Md Noor his first parliamentary seat in Pendang.

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