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9.6 million to exercise their constitutional right today

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - Tomorrow, Malaysians will exercise their constitutional right to elect those whom they wish to represent them in Parliament and in the 11 state assemblies over the next five years.

A total of 9,564,071 registered voters will go to the 6,931 polling centres to elect their representatives for 192 parliamentary and 393 state seats.

The 10th general election, which is the last for this millennium, is for the first time being held in one day.

The Election Commission gave political parties and other aspirants nine-days to campaign. Nomination day was Nov 20.

Polling centres in the peninsula will open from 8am to 5.30pm while those in Sabah and Sarawak will receive voters from 7.30am to 5pm.

Some centres in Sabah and Sarawak which are located in the interior and have a small number of voters will be closed earlier.

The EC is expecting a voter turnout of more than 70 per cent.

The 14-member Barisan Nasional, which is widely expected to retain its two-thirds majority in Parliament, has already bagged one parliamentary and one state seat.

These are the Betong parliamentary seat which was won by incumbent Douglas Ugah Anak Embas and the Tangkak state seat which was bagged by Yap Chik Dong.

BN chairman Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has repeatedly said that the party was confident of winning a two-thirds majority.

In 1995, the BN won a record four-fifths majority in Parliament and won in all states except Kelantan, where it was defeated by Pas.

The DAP hopes to deny the BN the two-thirds majority whereas Keadilan, Pas and PRM, the other members of the opposition front, hope to form the next Government.

The BN will have to win 129 seats to win with a two-thirds majority.

Umno is contesting in 105 parliamentary seats, the MCA (35), MIC (six), Gerakan and PBB (10 each), SUPP (seven), PBDS (six), UPKO and SNAP (four each), SAPP (three), PBRS and LDP (one each) and one direct candidate in Mambong, Sarawak.

Representing the Opposition for the parliamentary seats are Pas which will contest in 63 constituencies, Keadilan (59), DAP (47), PBS (17), MDP (11), Star (five), PRM (four), AKIM and Berjasa (one each) and Independents (28).

Umno will contest 275 state seats for the BN followed by MCA (77), MIC (55) and Gerakan (27).

Pas will contest in 238 state constituencies for the Opposition followed by DAP (89), Keadilan (67), MDP (eight), PRM (three), Akim (one) and Independents (14).

Most of the constituencies - 152 parliamentary and 367 state - will see straight fights between candidates from the BN and the opposition front of Pas, Keadilan, DAP and PRM.

Altogether 425 candidates will be vying for the parliamentary seats and 811 for the state seats.

In the last election when 192 parliamentary seats were at stake, the BN won 162.

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