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Barisan Nasional holds on to seven states

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KUALA LUMPUR: It was a day of shocks for Barisan Nasional as some of its big guns tumbled in the general election.

Though it had managed to secure a simple majority in parliament, the loose opposition alliance of the DAP, Pas and PKR managed to take control of Penang, Kedah, Selangor, Perak and retained Kelantan comfortably.

MIC president Datuk Seri S. Samy Vellu, Gerakan acting president and outgoing Penang chief minister Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon and Wanita Umno deputy head Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil were among the main casualties for BN.

Samy Vellu lost the Sungai Siput parliamentary seat on his 72nd birthday, which virtually ended a long and colourful career in politics spanning more than 30 years.

Koh, who moved from a state seat to contest the Batu Kawan parliamentary seat, lost to DAP newcomer P. Ramasamy, while Shahrizat was also beaten by a newcomer, Nurul Izzah Anwar of PKR, in Lembah Pantai.

The tide against BN also saw the ruling coalition losing its two-thirds majority in parliament and suffering casualties in Information Minister Datuk Seri Zainuddin Maidin, Umno treasurer Datuk Seri Mohd Azim Zabidi, and deputy ministers Datuk M.

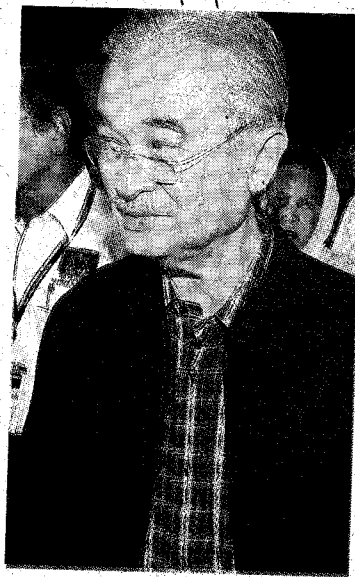
Kayveas (Prime Minister's Department) and Datuk Tan Chai Ho (Home Affairs).

However, the BN retained control of other states, although it saw some of its margins shaved from the previous election in 2004.

It reigned supreme in Johor, Sabah, Sarawak, Pahang, Malacca, Terengganu, Perlis and won Negeri Sembilan by a simple majority.

But the sensation was in the unexpected defeats that took a huge toll on Umno's main partners in the BN, namely the MCA, MIC and Gerakan.

MCA, which already did not have its deputy president Datuk Seri Chan Kong Choy and vice-president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek in its lineup, was further crippled with the defeat of Tan, central committee member Datuk Fu Ah Kiow, deputy Wanita chief Datuk Chew Mei Fun and vice-president



Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi arriving at the BN headquarters at the Putra World Trade Centre last night

Datuk Donald Lim.

As for Gerakan, of the 12 parliamentary seats it contested, it lost 10 and won only in Gerik and Simpang Renggam. It also lost 26 of the 31 state seats it vied for.

Apart from Samy Vellu, all of the other top leaders in the MIC were also ousted — deputy president Datuk G Palanivel in Hulu Selangor, vice-president Datuk S. Sothinathan in Teluk Kemang,

Youth chief S.A. Vigneswaran in Kota Raja and Wanita chief P. Komala Devi in Kapar.

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi retained his seat in Kepala Batas as did his deputy Datuk Seri Najib Razak in Pekan.

They and other top BN leaders monitored the results from the BN's headquarters at the Putra World Trade Centre.

The results and the upsets in many places put paid to opposition claims that the election process lacked transparency and that the Election Commission was biased towards the ruling coalition.

The results in Penang were stunning as it was the first time in 39 years that the opposition has managed to take over the state.

Koh, who was chief minister for 18 years, had an audience with the Yang di-Pertua Negeri Tun Rahman Abbas shortly before 9pm to concede defeat.

In 1969, Gerakan, which was then a newly formed opposition party, captured the state government, winning 16 of the 24 state seats, with Dr Lim Chong Eu as chief minister.

Up against the challenges of running an opposition state government and the political realities of the day, the party formed a coalition government two years later and shortly after, it joined the ruling federal coalition in an expanded Barisan Nasional.