

MALAYSIA

Date of Elections: 3 August 1986

Purpose of Elections

Elections were held for all the seats in the House of Representatives following premature dissolution of Parliament on 19 July 1986. Previous general elections had taken place in April 1982.

Characteristics of Parliament

The bicameral Parliament of Malaysia consists of a House of Representatives (*Dewan Ra'ayal*) and a Senate (*Dewan Negara*).

The House of Representatives comprises 177 members elected for a 5-year term*. Of these, 125 come from the 11 States of Malaya, 24 from Sarawak, 21 from Sabah and 7 from the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur.

The Senate comprises 69 members. Of these, 26, or 2 elected by each one of the country's 13 State Assemblies, are elected. The remaining 43 are appointed by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, or Supreme Head of the Federation of Malaysia, 3 for the Federal Territories and 40 from among persons who in his opinion have rendered distinguished public service or have achieved distinction in the professions, commerce, industry, agriculture, cultural activities or social service; who are representative of racial minorities; or who are capable of representing the interests of aborigines. Senators serve for a period of 3 years. The Senate is not subject to dissolution. No Senator may serve for more than two terms.

Electoral System

Every citizen who has attained the age of 21 and who is on the "qualifying date" (date by reference to which the electoral rolls are prepared or revised) resident in a constituency or, if not so resident, is classified as an "absent voter" (one who is registered as an absent voter in respect of that constituency) is entitled to vote in that constituency in any election to the House or Representatives. A person is disqualified from being an elector if on the qualifying date he is detained as a person of unsound mind, is an undischarged bankrupt, is serving a sentence of imprisonment, or remains liable, pursuant to a conviction in any part of the British Commonwealth, to a sentence of death or imprisonment for a term exceeding 12 months.

Electoral registers are drawn up at the constituency level and are revised annually. Voting is not compulsory. Postal voting is permitted for absent voters, members of the police force, those liable for certain duties on polling day and members of the Election Commission.

* See *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments XVIII* (1983-1984), p. 16.

Every citizen resident in the Federation is qualified to be a member of the House of Representatives if he is not less than 21 years old and of the Senate if at least 30 years old. A person is disqualified from being a member of either House of Parliament if he owes allegiance to any country outside the Federation, is insane or an undischarged bankrupt, or has been convicted and sentenced to imprisonment for a term of not less than one year or to a fine of not less than M\$ 2,000. Persons holding an "office of profit" (a full-time office in any of the public services, such as the office of any judge of the Federal Court or of a High Court, of Auditor-General, or of a member of the Election Commission) may for their part not simultaneously be members of Parliament.

Each candidate to Parliament - who need not necessarily be a member of a recognized political party - must be supported by a proposer and a seconder of his constituency. A candidate to the House of Representatives must make a monetary deposit of M\$ 5,000, which is reimbursed should the candidate poll more than one-eighth of the total number of votes polled by all the candidates in the constituency. A candidate for Parliament must lodge a return of campaign expenses within the time and in the manner required by law. The maximum expenses allowed are M\$ 50,000.

Representatives are elected in 177 single-member constituencies by simple majority vote.

By-elections are held, or appointments made, within 60 days to fill parliamentary seats which become vacant between general elections. Representatives' seats which become vacant within six months of the scheduled dissolution of Parliament are not filled.

General Considerations and Conduct of the Elections

Premature dissolution of Parliament was decided upon by Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad on 18 July 1986 in order to reinforce support for the policies of his Government. General elections were not normally due until June 1987.

For the enlarged House of Representatives' 177 seats, the ruling 13-party National Front coalition was challenged primarily by the Democratic Action Party (DAP). On Nomination Day (24 July), 425 candidates, including 52 independents, had been proposed. Issues during the brief eight-day campaign dealt with economic problems (caused largely by falling prices for Malaysia's key exports), corruption in government and Islamic fundamentalism as advocated by the Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PAS). The Prime Minister promised to encourage new low-cost housing, road building and manufacturing to stimulate economic growth. The DAP sought to deny the National Front the two-thirds House majority which would empower it to amend the Constitution.

On polling day, the multi-racial National Front, in power since 1974, upped its total of House seats to 148 and the Chinese-backed DAP, for its part, more than doubled its number. On 11 August, Prime Minister Mahathir reshuffled his Cabinet.

Statistics

1. *Results of the Elections and Distribution of Seats in the House of Representatives*

Number of registered electors.	6,791,446
Voters.	74.39%
Blank or void ballot papers.126,732
Valid votes.	4,625,272

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained ^a	%	Number of Seats
National Front171	2,649,238	57.28	148 (+16)
United Malays National Organization				83
Malaysian Chinese Association				17
Malaysian Indian Congress				6
<i>Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia</i>				5
<i>Parti Bersatu Sabah</i>10
United Sabah National Organization.				,
<i>Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu Sarawak</i>
<i>Parti Bansa Dayak Sarawak</i>				5
Sarawak National Party				4
Sarawak United People's Party				4
<i>Hizbul Muslim</i>				1
Democratic Action Party (DAP)	64	975,544	21.09	24 (+15)
Pan-Malaysan Islamic Party (PAS)	98	716,952	15.50	1 (-4)
Other parties.	40	136,635	2.95	—
Independents.	52	146,903	3.18	—4 (-4)
				177*

* 23 seats added since last elections.

2. *Distribution of Representatives according to Sex*

Men.	168
Women.	9
	177