

## MALAYSIA

**Date of Elections:** 8 July 1978

### **Purpose of Elections**

Elections were held for all the members of the House of Representatives following premature dissolution of Parliament on 12 June 1978. Previous general elections had taken place in August and September 1974.

### **Characteristics of Parliament**

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

The House of Representatives comprises 154 members elected for a maximum of 5 years. Of these, 109 come from the 11 States of Malaya, 24 from Sarawak, 16 from Sabah and 5 from the Federal Territory.

The Senate comprises 68 members. Of these, 28, or 2 elected by each one of the country's 13 States Assemblies and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, are elected. The remaining 40 are appointed by the *Yang di-Pertuan Agong*, or Supreme Head of the Federation of Malaysia, 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, but the Senate is not subject to dissolution.

### **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 of Representatives. A person is disqualified from being an elector if on the qualifying date he is detained as a person of unsound mind, 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.

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 MS 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 six registered electors of his constituency. A candidate to the House of Representatives must make a monetary deposit of MS 1,000, 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 to Parliament must lodge a return of campaign expenses within the time and in the manner required by law.

Representatives are elected in 154 single-member constituencies by simple majority.

By-elections are held, or appointments made, within 60 days (90 days in Sabah and Sarawak) 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 Political Considerations and Conduct of the Elections**

On the recommendation of the federal Prime Minister, Mr. Datuk Hussein Onn, the House of Representatives was dissolved in June 1978—more than a year before the expiry of its five-year term. The election date was announced the next day and nomination day was fixed for 21 June.

The House elections were combined with those for 10 State assemblies. Polling for Representatives was extended until 15 July in Sabah and 22 July in Sarawak because of communications difficulties in Borneo.

Following the 1974 elections, Prime Minister Tun Abdul Razak died in January 1976 and was succeeded by his deputy, Mr. Hussein Onn. In December 1977, the conservative Pan-Malaya Islamic Party (PMIP) was expelled from the ruling multi-racial National Front coalition, and a major Cabinet re-organization occurred. The National Front nevertheless still comprised 10 political groups, led by the United Malay National Organization (UMNO). Primary opponents to the Front were, once again, the Chinese-backed Democratic Action Party (DAP) and, naturally, the PMIP; some 50 independent candidates also ran. The two-week campaign was generally calm, public political rallies having been banned.

Polling day results left the National Front in dominant position, with DAP gaining seven seats. Prime Minister Hussein Onn (UMNO) announced the membership of his new Cabinet on 27 **July**.

**Statistics**

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

Number of registered electors. . . . .	5,059,689
Voters. . . . .	3,596,732*
Blank or void ballot papers. . . . .	.123,302
Valid votes. . . . .	3,473,430

\* Candidates were returned unopposed in nine constituencies. The registered electors from these constituencies therefore did not cast ballots.

Political Group	Number of Candidates	Votes obtained	%	Number of Seats	Number of Seats held at Dissolution	Number of Seats won at Previous Elections
National Front . . . . .	.152	1,987,907	57.2	130	135	144
Democratic Action Party (DAP). . . . .	.53	664,433	19.1	16	9	9
Pan-Malayan Islamic Party (PMIP). . . . .	.88	537,720	15.5	5	9	
Sarawak People's Organi- zation (SAPO) . . . . .	1	10,150	0.3	1		
Independents. . . . .	.50	160,370	4.6	2		
Other parties. . . . .	.26	112,850	3.2			
				154	154	154

\* The PMIP was expelled from the National Front in 1977.

2. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Professional Category*

	House of Representatives	Senate
Businessmen . . . . .	33	29
Lawyers . . . . .	31	5
Retired teachers and lecturers	30	6
Retired civil servants . . . . .	is	9
Politicians . . . . .	10	
Farmers and planters . . . . .	9	1
Doctors and dentists . . . . .	8	3
Journalists . . . . .	4	1
Bankers . . . . .	:	
Architects . . . . .	:	
Company directors . . . . .		i:
Others . . . . .		2
	154	68

3. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Sex*

	House of Representatives	Senate
Men . . . . .	147	51
Women . . . . .	7	7
	154	

4. *Distribution of Members of Parliament according to Age Group*

	House of Representatives	Senate
Under 30 years . . . . .	3	—
31-40 . . . . .	43	8
41-50 . . . . .	65	16
51-60 . . . . .	37	33
61-70 . . . . .	6	10
71-80 . . . . .		1
	154	68