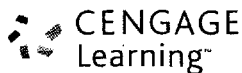

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN MALAYSIA



Edited by
ABDUL RASHID MOTEN

Government and Politics in Malaysia

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Abdul Rashid Moten



Australia • Brazil • Japan • Korea • Mexico • Singapore • Spain • United Kingdom • United States



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Government and Politics in Malaysia

Edited by Abdul Rashid Moten

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Political Parties and Party System

Political parties are part and parcel of democracies. In fact, modern democracy is unthinkable except in terms of parties. In democracies, parties offer “an excellent preliminary training for parliamentary candidature and eventual entry into parliament.”¹ Since independence in 1957, Malaysia has experienced many general elections mostly contested by political parties and a small number of independent non-party affiliated candidates. This chapter explains the nature of political parties and party system in Malaysia. It analyses the major political parties, their objectives and bases of support. It also evaluates the nature of party system in Malaysia and weighs its strengths and weaknesses.

Political Party and Party Systems

A political party is a formal association that competes in elections with the aim of forming a government or providing alternatives to government's policies. Edmund Burke defines political party as “a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed.”² However, this definition may not reflect the nature of contemporary political parties because they are often joined by members of different viewpoints. For example, in Malaysian political parties such as UMNO, there were leaders who are labelled as liberals and conservatives, suggesting that these members are not really united in their thoughts.

1 R.T. McKenzie, *British Political Parties* (London: Heinemann, 1963), 647.

2 Edmund Burke, *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Discontents*, quoted in Alan Ware, *Political Parties and Party Systems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 5.