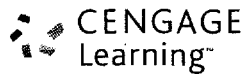

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN MALAYSIA



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

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The Bicameral Legislature

A parliament is a legislature or a representative assembly that enacts laws. However, there are some legislatures that perform functions other than law making. Legislatures are known by different names in different countries. In the United States, the legislature is known as Congress; in countries with a system of government based on the Westminster model, it is parliament.

The term parliament is derived from the French *parlement* that refers to a talk, a discussion, hence a meeting (an assembly, a court) where people discuss matters. Parliaments typically function under a parliamentary system of government organised according to the principle of fusion of powers, a system in which the executive is accountable to the parliament. Parliaments are either unicameral (with one chamber) or bicameral (having two chambers). Only a few countries, such as New Zealand, have unicameral parliaments. Some two-thirds of parliaments in the world, including the United Kingdom, India, Malaysia, Japan and Italy, have two chambers, an upper house and a lower house.¹ States also can have a three-chambered parliament as it was in South Africa before 1994, with one house each for whites, mixed race people, and east Indians. The majority black population was unrepresented in the national parliament. Since 1994, South Africa has adopted a bicameral parliamentary system.

The Parliament of Malaysia is bicameral at the Federal level and unicameral at the state level. The Upper House is designated as the Senate or Dewan Negara, and the Lower House as the House of Representatives

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *International Center for Parliamentary Documentation, Parliaments of the World: A Comparative Reference Compendium* (London: Gower Publishing Company, 1986).