

The 13th Malaysian general election: Uncertainties and expectations

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Abstract: Malaysia held its 13th general election on May 5, 2013 which was a contest between two coalitions, the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) and the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR). The latter's expectations for an outright win did not materialise. The election results have shown a rather status quo with minor losses and gains for the two coalitions. This study analysed the 13th election and found a number of noticeable trends. The Chinese voters have voted overwhelmingly for the opposition. The political culture of Malaysia is also shifting toward more participatory type with increased social and economic mobility. The days of one-party dominance in Malaysia are apparently over. The electoral politics in Malaysia might become more polarised along ethnic lines which may require reshuffling of its coalition framework and design.

Keywords: Malaysia; general elections; political participation; ethnic politics; coalition politics.

Abstrak: Malaysia mengadakan pilihan raya umum ke-13 pada 5 Mei 2013 yang merupakan pentandingan antara dua pakatan parti, parti pemerintah Barisan Nasional (BN) dan parti pembangkang Pakatan Rakyat (PR). PR berkobar-kobar dengan harapan untuk mencapai prestasi yang lebih baik berbanding pilihan raya sebelumnya. Namun, keputusan pemilihan undi menunjukkan hasil yang lebih kurang sama, dengan sedikit kekalahan dan kemenangan bagi kedua-dua pihak. Kajian ini menganalisis kesimpulan pemilihan tersebut dan ia mendapati beberapa trend yang jelas. Pengundi Cina dengan jelas memilih untuk mengundi

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parti pembangkang. Budaya politik di Malaysia juga kian beralih kepada jenis yang memberi lebih penyertaan dari segi mobiliti ekonomi dan sosial. Hari-hari yang didominasi oleh satu parti di Malaysia berkemungkinan akan berakhir. Oleh yang demikian, politik pilihan raya di Malaysia mungkin menjadi lebih berpecah mengikut kumpulan etnik yang mungkin memerlukan rombakan reka bentuk dan rangka kerja campuran yang ada.

Kata kunci: Malaysia; pilihan raya umum; penyertaan politik; politik etnik; politik pakatan.

Elections are the methods of choosing people's representatives to the government. In the contemporary world, all democracies practice representative governments through a systematic engagement and competitions among political parties. Different countries have adopted different types of electoral systems aiming at the best representation of the people to the government (Farrell, 2011; Gallagher & Mitchell, 2008).

Despite variations in electoral systems, these democracies share certain features. First is the eligibility to vote that defines whose voice is counted politically. Second is the method of election that defines how representation of the people is counted. The method generally includes first-past-the-post which is based on the number of votes, and proportional representation which offers the percentage of people's representation to the government according to the percentage of votes a party receives in elections. Third is the division of the country or the total electorate into electoral districts or constituencies (known as apportionment and districting) which ensures fair representation of people from all regions. Finally, there are rules for conducting free, fair and transparent elections, which ensure equality and acceptability. Through these mechanisms, linkages are established among voters, political parties, and the holding of political power and its exercise, making representative democracy meaningful. In the light of these observations, this article analyses the 13th general election of Malaysia, which has been dubbed as "historic" (Majid, 2013).

The government and party system in Malaysia

Malaysia, a federal parliamentary democracy with constitutional monarchy, comprises 13 states and three Federal Territories. It has a bicameral legislature with the lower house (*Dewan Rakyat* or Peoples' Assembly) having 222 seats, and the upper house (*Dewan Negara* or

National Assembly) having 70 seats. The members of the lower house are directly elected by the electorates for a five-year term, while the upper house members are partly elected by state assembly and partly appointed by the *Yang Di Pertuan Agong* (the King). At the state level, 13 states have directly elected local assemblies for a five-year term. All the state level elections are held simultaneously with the national level elections except in Sarawak. Since independence, Malaysia has had 13 general elections, the first was in 1959 and the last in 2013. The government of Malaysia has all along been controlled by the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO) dominated Barisan Nasional (BN), the ruling coalition.

Malaysia operates a multiparty system. According to the Election Commission (EC), there are 33 registered political parties, 13 of whom are part of the ruling coalition called National Front or *Barisan Nasional* (BN). In this coalition, the main parties are UMNO, Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC) and Malaysian People's Movement Party (Gerakan). Other parties include People's Progressive Party (PPP), Sabah United People's Party (SUPP), PBRB, Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (SPDM), Sarawak Peoples Party (PRS), Gerakan, United Traditional Bumiputera Party (PBB), United Sabah Party (PBS), Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), and United Pasok-Kadazan-Murut Organisation (UPKO) (Mokhtar, 2007; Hai, 2002).

Given the dominance of the BN, the opposition parties remained almost invisible until late 1990s. There have been unsuccessful attempts to form an opposition coalition. In the aftermath of the 2008 election, the PKR, under the leadership of Anwar Ibrahim, formed a coalition under the name of Pakatan Rakyat (PR) in alliance with Parti seIslam Malaysia (PAS) and Democratic Action Party (DAP). Therefore, the 13th election became a contest between two opposing coalitions, the BN and the PR. Unlike other Westminster systems where coalitions are post-election arrangement to form the government, in Malaysia they are formed before the election and continue to function even after the elections are over.

Nomination and campaign in the 13th parliamentary elections

The *Yang Di Pertuan Agong* announced the dissolution of the parliament on 3rd April on the advice of Prime Minister, Najib Tun Razak. Upon notification, the EC set April 20 as the nomination day and May 5, 2013

as the polling day. According to the EC reports, the 13th parliamentary election involved 222 nomination centres, 234,905 election workers, and a budget of RM400 (\$121) millions. The number of voters stood at over 13.2 million (13,268,002) of whom about 40 per cent were below 40 years of age. The EC fixed a 15-day campaign period starting from April 21 to May 4 (Ahmad & Sipalan, 2013).

At the end of the nomination period, the following facts emerged (Majid, 2013):

1. A total of 1,767 forms for 222 parliamentary seats, and 3,229 forms for 505 state seats were sold. An additional 997 forms were sold to independent candidates.
2. A total of 1,901 candidates were to contest, of whom 579 were for 222 parliamentary and 1,322 for 505 state seats. Out of the total, 1,732 were male and 168 female candidates. According to the EC, 230 out of 579 parliamentary candidates were aged between 21-49, many of whom were professionals, and entrepreneurs.
3. There was a 40 per cent increase in women contestants compared to 2008 elections. Of the 168 female candidates, 56 contested for parliamentary and 112 for state seats.
4. No parliamentary or state seats returned unopposed. A total of 132 parliamentary and 320 state assembly seats saw straight fights and 90 parliamentary and 320 state seats saw multi-cornered fights.
5. There were an unprecedented 270 independent candidates (79 for parliamentary and 191 for state seats).

With the nominations settled, the parties and candidates jumped into campaign vigorously. A number of issues were raised during the election campaign.

First, the campaign was overwhelmingly dominated by economic issues. The PR coalition had published a detailed manifesto well ahead of the ruling BN coalition promising lucrative economic and social welfare benefits (“Manifesto Rakyat,” 2013) including cheap housing, free education, toll-free highways, and free WiFi services; waiver of government loans for qualified borrowers; reduction in petroleum, gas, cooking oil, and car prices; and reduction in water and electricity charges. The two popular slogans that the PR coalition used to attract

the voters were *ubah* (change) and *inikali lah tukar* (this is the time for change).

BN also came up with an elaborate manifesto describing what the government has done to the voters in the past four years and what it plans to do next. Themed *Rakyat Didahulukan* (People First), the manifesto included 19 major issues such as improving cost of living, urban well-being, health and transport services, infrastructural and rural transformation, women's development, education, public safety, religious freedom and harmony, fighting corruption, and affordable housing ("GE13," 2013). The two coalitions also published manifestos at the state level which reflected economic promises more prominently.

Second, the PR coalitions had adopted a strategy of nominating their top party leaders to contest in the ruling BN strongholds such as in Johor and Federal Territory seats. Thus, Lim Kit Siang of DAP contested in Johor against the long term Chief Minister of Johor, Abdul Ghani Othman. The PR aimed at increasing its share of seats from the states of Johor, Sabah and Sarawak, which had many Chinese majority constituencies, and thus win a simple majority of seats and form the government ("Kit Siang," 2013).

Third, negativity dominated the campaign. The most severe anti-party campaign was conducted by MCA against DAP, especially in the state of Johor. The MCA launched a sustained press campaign against DAP and PAS with full-page advertisements in major daily newspapers. In the *Daily Star*, MCA has placed more than 30 full-page anti-party campaign against DAP in general and DAP-Johor in particular. The themes of these press campaigns were "vote wisely based on facts," and "A vote for DAP is a Vote for PAS," ("Know where your vote really goes," 2013) meaning that voting for DAP would transform Johor into another Kelantan with Islamic rule ("PM will be from PAS," 2013), poverty ("Vote DAP and help bankrupt," 2013), and shutting down of business ("Malaysian business owners," 2013) and entertainment outlets ("Will DAP really help," 2013).

The major English dailies also ran many full-page advertisements on behalf of the BN highlighting the achievements of the government over the past four years. These advertisements featured the government's economic well-being initiatives, Economic Transformation Programme and a number of 1Malaysia programmes. Taking advantage of the

publications of the economic forecasts of the leading international financial institutions, these advertisements frequently featured Malaysia's impressive growth performances under the BN coalition ("Strong economic growth," 2013). In addition, two to four page advertisements were placed by the Ministry of Domestic Trade, Cooperatives and Consumerism highlighting the handsome subsidies the government has given in April 2013 on consumer goods such as petroleum, diesel, cooking oil, rice, sugar, and wheat flour. It also featured total yearly subsidies given in these goods in 2013 (estimated RM22.289 billion) and 2012 (22.261 billion) signifying the contributions of the BN-led government to make the life of the voters much easy. BN's press-media also included personal advertisements by Johor BN political influential Abdul Ghani Othman under the title "my worry for Johor" (Othman, 2013), and by an influential intellectual with a full-page 'open letter' to the nation (Muzaffar, 2013).

One campaign issue that created uproar was the *hudūd* (Islamic capital punishment) laws (Zolkepli, Habibu, Yee, Yun, & Lee, 2013; "More push for hudud," 2013; Randhawa & Ramli, 2013). PAS reiterated that it would implement *hudūd* laws if it forms the federal government, which DAP rejected. An internal disagreement over the *hudūd* issue among the PR coalition members led the BN to quickly point out the disunity in the PR. This also made the MCA to intensify its attack on DAP.

Electoral corruption was also a major campaign issue. The PR accused the EC of favouring BN with washable indelible ink. The opposition continued its cyber war and accused the government of bringing *bomohs* (witchdoctors) from Pakistan, Thailand, Africa and Indonesia to sabotage the elections; of BN conspiring to cause food-shortage in case of election defeat; and using Malaysian Airlines (MAS) to fly in fake voters from Sabah and Bangladesh ("It's a dirty war," 2013).

The ruling coalition adopted a new strategy this time which is the integrity pledge. According to one report, 78 candidates in Selangor BN pledged to conduct ethically, to be accountable, to stay away from bribery and to avoid corrupt practices (Mahmood, 2013). This is apparently to impress the voters in the state and to garner more votes. PR on its part secured an endorsement from a Dubai based Islamic

scholar in favour of PKR de facto leader Anwar Ibrahim declaring him to be the most deserving candidate, from Islamic point of view, for the prime minister.

This time a new campaign element was added which is violence. Generally, Malaysian elections were nonviolent, but this time around, some 1,200 cases of electoral violence were reported to the police that involved usage of home-made Molotov cocktails, petrol bombs, machetes, knives, and threats. In a number of cases, opponent party supporters set fire on campaign and operation centres in and around the federal territory. The police made about 45 arrests on charges of violence (Zolkepli, Kumar, Daniel, Chew, & Tan, 2013).

The GE13 results

The polling between 8:00 am and 5:00 pm on May 5, 2013 went on smoothly without any significant incidents. Some PR supporters in Klang accused that some Bangladeshi workers were casting ballots in favour of BN and some pictures were uploaded on Facebook which created a fuss. However, the EC declared that names listed in the voters' list are those of Malaysian citizens, even if they were of foreign origin, and that only those whose names appear on the voters' list were allowed to vote.

The results of the elections showed the BN with a majority seat in the national parliament. With a record 84.5 per cent voter turnout, the final results gave the BN 133 and the opposition PR coalition 89 out of 222 parliamentary seats, while at the state level, the BN coalition won 275, and the opposition garnered 230 out of 505 seats. The BN retained majority in the national parliament, and re-took the state of Kedah from PAS. In the rest, the status quo was maintained.

Analysis of the results

The results of parliamentary seats show BN losing popular votes but kept a majority in parliamentary seats. As shown in Table 1, the BN secured 133 seats with 47.38 per cent popular votes compared to 140 seats with 50.27 per cent popular votes in 2008. This means a loss of seven seats and 2.89 per cent of popular votes. PR, on the other hand, this time, won 89 seats with 50.87 per cent popular votes compared to 82 seats and 46.75 per cent popular votes in 2008. This means the coalition has gained seven more seats and an increase of 4.12 per cent popular votes.

For parliamentary seats, BN showed its strength in nine out of 13 states, i.e., Perlis, Kedah, Pahang, Putrajaya, Melaka, Johor, Labuan, Sabah, and Sarawak. In Kelantan, Pulau Penang, Kuala Lumpur FT and Selangor, the opposition emerged stronger. In Terengganu, Melaka and Negri Sembilan the BN performed well but with much resistance. In the state of Perak, both BN and PR were almost equal in strength.

Table 1: Results of the GE13 parliamentary elections

Parties	Seats contested in	Seats won in	Seats won in
	2013	2013	2008
BN	221	133	140
UMNO	120	88	79
MCA	37	7	15
Gerakan	11	1	2
MIC	9	4	3
PPP	1	0	0
PBB	14	14	14
SUPP	7	1	6
PRS	6	6	6
SPDP	4	4	4
PBS	5	4	3
PBRIS	1	1	1
UPKO	4	3	4
LDP	1	0	1
SAPP	1	0	2
PR	223	89	82
DAP	51	38	28
PKR	99	30	31
PAS	73	21	23
Independent	79	0	0

Source: Compiled from "GR13 Results," *New Straits Times*, May 7, 2013; Election Commission Malaysia at www.spr.gov.my.

In terms of party level performance, GE13 has altered some established patterns. The BN's reduced number of total seats in this year's elections is reflective of poorer performance by the coalition partners. UMNO, the largest and dominant partner of the BN coalition, has seen its support slightly increased. But this could be due to the majority support of Malay and Bumiputera voters of Sabah and Sarawak. In fact, it is Sabah and Sarawak that saved the BN this time as well. MCA, the second major partner of BN and mainstream Chinese representative party at the national level, performed very poorly winning only seven out of 37 seats contested compared to its 15 out of 40 it won in 2008. This is apparently due to the Chinese voters favouring the opposition, either DAP or other PR component partners. Prime Minister Najib called it a Chinese tsunami. It indicates either the Chinese voters have lost confidence in MCA and looking for an alternative ethnic representation, or they are shifting their support from BN to PR as alternative governing coalition. They were willing to take anything but BN.

MIC, the fourth major partner of BN, did not do well either. It has won in four out of nine parliamentary seats contested. Its winners are among the top leaders such as the president, deputy president, vice president and a regional chief. Among those who lost include one vice president, secretary general, information chief and one division chief.

The third major partner of BN, that is, Gerakan has almost been wiped out. It managed to get only one parliamentary seat out of 11 contested, compared to two out of 12 it contested in 2008 elections. This time it lost in Perak, Kedah, Selangor, Federal Territory, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka and Pahang. With such successive poor performance the party clearly has lost its acceptance among the Chinese support-base.

Taking the declining performance of the BN's major partners into consideration, excluding UMNO, it is evident that the alliance has undergone a major shift in its support base. Practically, the MCA, MIC and Gerakan have collectively contributed only 12 seats to BN's 133 wins compared with their 20 seats contribution in 2008 elections. Therefore, BN's existence in the Peninsular depends on the lone UMNO which survives on the Malay voters, and the coalition is gradually losing its Chinese and Indian voters. Overall, the BN's existence now depends

much on the Sabah and Sarawak's support base which is dangerous for the coalition as the parties in these two states are regional.

The GE13 saw the loss of a number of top leaders of BN, two of them being the long serving chief ministers of Melaka and Johor. Others who lost the election include Raja Nong Chik (Minister of Federal Territories and Urban Well-being), Chor Che Heung, Donald Lim Siang Chai and Kong Cho Ha. Even though the central leaders made festive tours to these seats, and Abdul Ghani Othman, the chief minister of Johor, made especial request to the voters of his constituency through a pull-page newspaper ad, and a continuous attack on DAP by MCA through dozens of full-page newspaper ads, the BN 'titans' could not be saved. This probably tells about the significance of the young voters and the change of mindset about leadership. Perhaps, the BN's strategy of fielding 33 per cent new and young candidates have saved many other parliamentary seats this time.

The performance of the opposition alliance, PR, is much poorer than expected. The opposition took this election as 'Road to Putrajaya' with growing confidence that people overwhelmingly wanted a change in the government and that they would definitely move to Putrajaya. However, the election results did frustrate their expectations.

At the party level, DAP has seen increase in seat from 29 in 2008 to 38 which is perhaps due to shifting of MCA votes to DAP. Likewise, PKR has seen increase in its share of parliamentary seats from 23 in 2008 to 30 in 2013, but PAS's seat share declined from 23 in 2008 to 21 in 2013. It is to be noted that the DAP came close to its expected 40 seats; PKR was short of 15 from its expected 45 seats; and PAS could gain only slightly more than half the coalition expected. Apparently, PKR and PAS are lagging far behind the mainstream Malay-based UMNO. The two parties secured only 51 seats as opposed to UMNO's 88 seats.

The election results show the centrality of ethnicity in voting pattern. It is clear that PAS candidates relied exclusively on the Malay ethnic voters. Among its 21 winning seats, 16 seats had over 80 per cent, three seats had between 64-70 per cent and two seats had between 50-60 per cent Malay majorities. PKR had its advantage of either largely Chinese majority, or Chinese and Indian majority, or Malay

majority with substantial percentage of Chinese voters. Two-thirds of its seats won had between 31-50 per cent Chinese voters together with a substantial percentage of Indian voters. Seven of the seats it won had Chinese voters between 20-30 per cent together with Indian voters. One seat had a Chinese majority with 51-70 per cent and another seat had more than 70 per cent of Chinese voters. However, one seat (Gombak) won had more than 73 per cent Malay voters. The DAP relied largely on the Chinese voters. Roughly one-third of the seats won by DAP had Chinese voters between 31-50 per cent, another one-third had between 51-70 per cent, and the remaining one-third had more than 70 per cent Chinese voters.

Furthermore, in terms of ethnic composition of candidacy, PAS's candidates were Malay only; PKR's candidates were first Malay (62), then Chinese (32) then Indian (5); and finally, DAP's candidates were first Chinese (38), then Indian (7) and finally Malay (6). The candidacy and voting patterns suggest that the parties operate basically along ethnic lines, and the voters also largely remained along the same ethnic lines. Since BN members contested under the banner of BN instead of separate party banners the voters voted for the candidates chosen by the BN. However, ethnicity still played a major role. Candidates from MCA (58) and MIC (10) are placed in Chinese and Indian majority areas respectively or in a mix of the two. Regional parties are placed in regional seats, especially in Sabah and Sarawak. So, ethnicity features strongly in voting behaviour.

Despite the increase in total number of seats, the PR has seen its majority margins narrowed in certain constituencies. A number of PR heavyweights have also been defeated in the poll. They include PAS deputy spiritual leader Haron Din, PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu, PAS Vice President Husam Musa, PKR Secretary General Saifuddin Nasution, and PKR Johor Chief Chua Jui Meng. Predictably, no independent candidate won any seat signifying the irrelevance of non-party electoral contests.

GE13 state assembly elections

All the states in Malaysia except Sarawak had State Assembly elections on the same day, and basically the same political parties contested as well. The results are shown in Table 2.

The BN coalition had expected threefold challenges in state elections - first, potential loss of additional state assemblies other than Kedah and Selangor which slipped away from BN's grip in 2008; second, retaining the volatile states such as Perak and Terengganu; and finally, regaining the lost states of Kedah and Selangor. These concerns kept the BN coalition nervous and tense. In addition, BN wanted to give a hard push in Kelantan with a domino effect of Terengganu.

Table 2: Results: GE13 state assembly elections

States	Total Seats	BN	DAP	PKR	PAS	Others
Perlis	15	13	-	1	1	-
Kedah	36	20	2	5	9	-
Kelantan	45	12	-	1	32	-
Terengganu	32	17	-	1	14	-
Pulau Penang	40	10	19	10	1	-
Perak	59	31	18	6	5	-
Pahang	42	30	7	2	3	-
Selangor	56	12	15	14	15	-
Negri Sembilan	36	22	11	3	-	-
Melaka	28	21	6	-	1	-
Johor	56	38	13	1	4	-
Sabah	60	49	4	5	-	1
Total	505	275	95	49	85	1

Source: Calculated from "GE13 Results," *New Straits Times*, May 7, 2013.

On the other hand, the PR coalition was apparently confident of retaining the states it won in 2008, i.e., Selangor, Penang, Kelantan and Kedah. So it eyed other states and launched an aggressive campaign which created psychological pressure on the BN coalition. In turn, the BN intensified its campaign, especially in Perak and Selangor, where it had been making new development and welfare promises almost on a daily basis to lure the voters.

The poll results had been mixed between expectations and losses. The BN coalition regained Kedah with 20 out of 36 seats, and maintained absolute or dominant majority in Perlis, Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor and Sabah assemblies. In terms of state-wise compositions, BN maintained absolute or two-thirds majority in six

states which are Perlis, Pahang, Negri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor, and Sabah. In Terengganu and Perak BN maintained a simple majority and it managed to get only 10 and 12 seats in Pulau Penang and Selangor respectively which proved the opposition's strength. However, surprisingly, BN made an impressive inroad in Kelantan winning 12 seats which is double than 2008 gains.

Even though the opposition lost Kedah but it maintained Pulau Penang, Kelantan and Selangor comfortably. In all the three states the opposition maintained two-thirds majority. But the striking feature in almost all the state assemblies is that the opposition has reduced the number of seats, the popular votes for BN and its margin of difference vary significantly. In nine states the opposition reduced the number of seats for BN significantly. Compared with 2008 results, the 2013 results show that BN's seats reduced from 14 to 13 in Perlis, from 24 to 17 in Terengganu, from 11 to 10 in Pulau Penang, from 37 to 30 in Pahang, from 20 to 12 in Selangor, from 25 to 21 in Melaka, from 50 to 38 in Johor, and from 59 to 49 in Sabah. These are indicative of the shifting balance of party influence and popularity in these states for both BN and PR coalitions. The results show that BN's share of total seats has slipped from 307 in 2008 to 275 in 2013, while PR's seats increased from 196 in 2008 to 229 in 2013.

In terms of individual party achievements, DAP's success is impressive. Its total number of seats increased from 73 in 2008 to 95 in 2013, which is a clear impression of shifting Chinese votes to the opposition. PKR has gained a handsome increase from 40 in 2008 to 49 in 2013, while PAS gained only two increases in 2013, from 83 in 2008 to 85 seats.

At state level elections too, ethnicity mattered highly in candidate selection. Out of 505, BN fielded only 48 Chinese and five Indian; DAP out of 103 fielded only 13 Indian and 3 Malay; PKR out of 172 fielded only 29 Chinese and 13 Indian; and PAS out of 236 fielded only 3 Chinese and 1 Indian candidates.

Conclusion

The 2013 General Elections in Malaysia has been an historic election for a number of reasons. It was the election in which the ruling coalition was nervous as it carried the memory of its landslide erosion of popularity in 2008. This election attracted the highest number of contestants in

Malaysian history including highest number of independent and female candidates. It also witnessed every single parliamentary and state seat fiercely contested, and no seat was won unopposed. This election has caused the major parties to wisely calculate their expectations, threats and opportunities. And most important, this election has brought for the first time two large coalitions facing each other with almost equal strength. A staggering RM400 million budget allocated and an impressive 19 electoral changes introduced by the Election Commission made this year's elections truly historic in Malaysia.

The number 13, as in the 13th general elections and in the year 2013, appeared to be unlucky for the ruling coalition but lucky for the opposition. Though the election results have not brought about major changes, they nonetheless have made significant imprint on electoral politics in Malaysia. Despite impressive and fabulous subsidies, economic and social welfare, hard cash assistance, dozens of national economic development programmes that the BN government has introduced during the past four years of Najib's rule, the ruling BN coalition witnessed further erosion of its popularity among the voters. The coalition has performed poorly compared to its wins in 2008. BN's two major coalition partners, MCA and Gerakan, suffered miserably. The Chinese voters have clearly sided with DAP and PKR both in parliamentary and state assembly seats. Similarly, at the state assembly elections, even though BN has retained its grip on most of the states, its grips are loose encouraging the opposition to make a slow but impressive inroad.

This year's elections have made it clear that the political culture of Malaysia is also shifting to more participatory type with increasing rate of voters' turnout at 84.5 per cent and a vibrant young generation of voters with increased social and economic mobility. With the political restrictions being relaxed, this participatory trend is likely to strengthen in future. However, it is likely that the electoral politics in Malaysia might become more polarised along ethnic lines which may require reshuffling of its coalition framework and design. If UMNO becomes the sole representative of BN in the politics in Peninsular Malaysia, and PAS and PKR hold the majority Malay voters in the opposition, then probably a redesigning of a new ruling coalition composed of the three parties would usher a new era in Malaysian electoral politics. In any case, one thing is very clear in Malaysian politics: the days of one-party dominance in Malaysia are over. It is only Sabah and Sarawak that may

keep the BN coalition surviving for some more times, but a slight loose in their grip may enable the PR to change the political and electoral landscape in Malaysia.

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