Malaysia on the cusp of becoming a ‘normal democracy’

A fragmented party system, struggles with voter turnout, uncertainty over the electoral outcome, and protracted negotiations over who gets to form the government—these are common features in democracies in many parts of the world.

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For The Straits Times

Malaysia’s Parliament was dissolved on Oct 13. Elections must now be held within the next 60 days of that date. Much has changed in the country since the opposition coalition Pakatan Harapan (PH) defeated the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) just four years ago. Malaysia has seen three prime ministers since then—Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Mohd Ali Haji Mohd. Radzi, Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, and the current Tan Sri Dato’ Sri Ismail Sabri Yaakob. The general election, which is the major political event in Malaysia, is seen as a test of the government’s popularity and its ability to govern. The country is divided into 222 constituencies, and voters cast their ballots for the party or candidate they believe will best represent their interests. The party or candidate with the most seats becomes the government. The elections are run by the Electoral Commission, which is an independent body responsible for overseeing the electoral process.

Given the various developments, what are some things we can expect from the upcoming elections?

The fragmentation of the party system in Malaysia has been a common feature in recent elections. The number of political parties has increased, leading to a more fragmented political landscape. This fragmentation can lead to political instability, as it is difficult for any one party to form a stable government. The fragmentation can also lead to a lack of accountability, as it is difficult for voters to hold their elected representatives accountable for their actions.

In the recent elections, there were three main political forces: the ruling BN, the opposition PH, and the new party, Gerakan. The BN is led by former Prime Minister Najib Razak, while the PH is led by current Prime Minister Ismail Sabri Yaakob. Gerakan is led by veteran politician Anwar Ibrahim. The BN and PH are both traditional parties, while Gerakan is a more centrist and reformist party.

The BN, under Najib Razak, was in power from 2009 to 2018. During its time in power, Najib was known for his controversial policies, including the 1MDB scandal, a multi-billion dollar corruption scandal that involved the Malaysian government. The BN was eventually defeated in the 2018 general elections by the PH, which promised to bring about a “new Malaysia.”

The PH, under Mahathir Mohamad, won the election but was later dissolved in 2020. The elections were marred by allegations of corruption and interference in the electoral process. The BN, under Muhyiddin Yassin, emerged as the winning party, although it did not win a majority of seats in the parliament. The BN was able to form a government with the support of the Malay party, UMNO, and the Chinese party, MIC.

The upcoming elections, which are scheduled for mid-2022, are expected to be tightly contested. The main political parties are expected to focus on issues such as corruption, economic growth, and national unity. The elections are also expected to be marked by political violence and fraud, as has been the case in previous elections. The elections are also expected to be closely watched by international observers, as they are seen as a test of Malaysia’s commitment to democracy and good governance.

In conclusion, the upcoming elections in Malaysia are expected to be a test of the country’s commitment to democracy and good governance. The elections are expected to be tightly contested, with the main political parties focusing on issues such as corruption, economic growth, and national unity. The elections are also expected to be marked by political violence and fraud, as has been the case in previous elections. The elections are also expected to be closely watched by international observers, as they are seen as a test of Malaysia’s commitment to democracy and good governance.