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GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS OF MALAYSIA

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FOREWORD

THE Southeast Asian Studies Program (SEASP) was established in 1976 in response to a need to promote comparative research and writing on South-East Asia by scholars in the Social Sciences and Humanities. Of particular concern was the lack of appropriate tertiary level teaching and reference materials pertaining to the region and written from local, though not necessarily nationalistic, perspectives.

Towards this end, SEASP launched two separate but inter-related projects: one focused on the preparation of a series of country-specific volumes on Politics and Government, and the other on History.

The project on Government and Politics comprised the production of a volume each on Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. As the work involved more than fifty scholars and the project was complicated, it became increasingly evident that the task was going to take much longer than originally envisaged. Thus it was not surprising when the first manuscript to be completed was delivered only in 1982. After submission, each manuscript had to undergo a process of review by two independent referees—one from within and one from outside the region—to ensure the desired quality. We are delighted to see the third volume of the series, *Government and Politics of Malaysia*, in print and look forward to the publication of the rest in due course.

Needless to say, the project on Government and Politics could not have been completed without the cooperation of the individual contributors, editors, and coordinators involved. In the case of Malaysia, we are especially thankful to Associate Professor Zakaria Haji Ahmad, who in addition to being the editor, was the coordinator of the project as a whole. We would also like to express our appreciation to the Ford Foundation for its generous financial support to SEASP and its various projects, including that on Government and Politics.

In thanking all our benefactors and contributors, as well as others who have in one way or another helped to make this publication possible, it is clearly understood that responsibility for the facts and opinions expressed in *Government and Politics of Malaysia* rests with the individual authors and editors, and their interpretations do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of SEASP or its supporters.

THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
SOUTHEAST ASIAN STUDIES PROGRAM

PREFACE

THIS book is the culmination of the effort initiated by the Southeast Asian Studies Program (SEASP), an enterprise established by leading South-East Asian scholars in co-operation with the Institute of South-east Asian Studies (ISEAS, Singapore) and the Ford Foundation, to produce textbooks on South-East Asia written by South-East Asians. Although the founding fathers of SEASP had originally conceived the idea of regional textbooks on politics, history and world-views, the project was subsequently seen as more manageable on a country, rather than regional, basis. Country teams were then established to cover each individual country.

The Malaysian team embarked on the Malaysian Politics and Government Project (MPG) in late 1977. Although SEASP had conceived of a standard format for each country textbook on politics and government, it was decided by the MPG team to cover as many dimensions as possible of the subject and to include participants from all 'relevant' disciplines from the three major universities of Malaysia. However, as might have been predicted, a variety of problems arose that rendered difficult the achievement of MPG's noble objective. That it has taken more than four years to do the job is simply a reflection of the difficulties faced in the project. As co-ordinator and editor of the MPG, I am pleased therefore that the project has been completed.

The net result, which is this selection of readings on Malaysian politics and government, is not the sum total of all that was done by those who have participated in this project; certain criteria of selectivity and quality have been employed. It is necessary to state as well that this book differs much from the original formulation that was conceived when the MPG began. It should be noted that it has not been possible to be up to date in the main body of the book with the many rapid developments and events taking place in Malaysia, although an attempt has been made to update, where possible, dates and events in the Postscript at the end of the book. If the volume suffers from any shortcomings, we are ever sanguine others will take up where we have left off and that it will spur them to attempt a better job. We hope, then, that this effort will serve as a forerunner for more textbooks and the publication of original research findings on politics and government by other indigenous scholars in Malaysia.

In making this enterprise possible, I wish to thank *all* those who participated in MPG, not least my co-authors for their patience, perseverance, co-operation and understanding in coping with the persistent