

PRESS STATEMENT
30th of AUGUST 2018
YOUTH PERCEPTION ON NEW MALAYSIA

IMAN Research, a Malaysian think tank which studies society, religion and perception, found that youths played a pivotal role in the recent shift of political power. In a study IMAN conducted commissioned by UNICEF on the GE14 outcome, 40.9% of registered voters for the 14th General Election were aged between 21 and 39. This showed an increase of voting power among youths in Malaysia, that were also most vocal in venting their grouses of a then “corrupt” government and its impact on their livelihood. As a result, youth participation was heavily emphasized throughout the election campaign period.

As such, IMAN felt it was important to return to the field to communicate with youths on their varied opinions and perceptions of the new Pakatan Harapan Government (PH), as well as their desires and hopes in moving past their first one hundred days in power. This study engaged with youths from selected states across Malaysia on their views of the new government as a way to expand discourse on governance, politics and leadership.

Methodology

Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were selected as the primary method of data collection for this study, which involves organizing sessions with 5-7 participants mediated by facilitators. Unlike other forms of data gathering, FGDs allow researchers to learn about the participants views on a subject directly and through their interaction with others. In a group setting, where not all participants may know each other, participants would alter their views and opinions on a subject depending on the members of the session.

This study targeted Malaysian youths between the ages of 18 - 35, of any gender, class, employment and marital status, all of whom were residing in five major states around the country; Klang Valley, Johor, Terengganu, Penang and Sabah. The sessions were established as a safe space where each participant was encouraged to talk candidly and freely about their feelings on the current state of Malaysia without fear of judgement from others.

In order to reflect the plurality of Malaysia’s population, each FGD was comprised of various compositions for a variety of social groupings. We formed FGDs that were representative of social groups with a single common characteristic (like ethnicity, location, age range) as well as social groups with a high majority or mixed membership.

Findings

IMAN found the following which are divided into three major themes:

Social issues

All participants have indicated a feeling of great satisfaction with the change of government. Youths are very happy with the new sense of freedom and openness they acquired after the change of government. Hence, it is important for Pakatan Harapan to maintain and expand this sense of freedom to increase youths participation in Malaysian democracy.

However PH's 100 day promise meant very little to the majority of our participants, with a number disbelieving most of the promises were actually achievable in such a short period of time. As such, the 100 days promises were not a reason to vote for change. Nevertheless, some of the major issues that were brought up in lieu with this are trust issues and some scepticism towards the new government. One such reason given was that of previous BN personalities who are now in the PH government.

Economic issues

The main task for Pakatan Harapan is to create more employment opportunities for youths, and to have a robust national economic plan. A recurring theme is that of the lack of job opportunities and a minimum wage before and after the GE14. Participants who voted for PH wanted to see better employment opportunities made available. All participants of the FGD have also mentioned support for the abolishment of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), but are still wary and confused with the Sales and Service Tax (SST). Some have suggested the immediate need for more education on how the SST works.

Political issues

Despite the overwhelming support for Pakatan Harapan, their position in power is not as secure as it seems. Participants have indicated the possibility of switching their support for other political parties in the event they begin to present better suggestions for growth and progress. Participants have indicated an unease with the emergence of identity and revenge politics in the national political sphere. They have also expressed concerns for some of Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad's policies. Data from the FGDs has also helped IMAN identify several notable political figures both in the government and opposition.

Finally, the New Malaysia Youth Study report will also include data on state specific issues such as participant's support of the abolishment of local government bodies (JKKK) by the federal government (Johor and Terengganu), a revisiting of the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (Sabah), issues of oil royalties (Terengganu and Sabah) and Islamic sensitivities (Terengganu, Kelantan and Sabah).

A full copy of the report will be made available to the public on IMAN's website next week at <http://www.imanresearch.com/>

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