

## **Youth must be vanguard of political change in M'sia**

**Malaysiakini**

**20 September 2017**

**By Lim Kit Siang**

MP SPEAKS | A recent Merdeka Center National (Youth) Opinion Survey [found](#) that despite being highly dissatisfied with the BN government, the youth in the country are also dispirited with the political system as a whole.

The Merdeka Center asked youths how satisfied they were with the performance of the BN federal government, to which two-thirds – 67 percent – answered that they were dissatisfied. Only 24 percent said they were satisfied with the government's performance.

High dissatisfaction rates were registered by respondents across race, urban and rural divides, as well as between those registered to vote and those unregistered.

The survey, which looked at perceptions of youth towards the economy, leadership and current issues, also asked respondents about their attitudes towards politics, and found that an overwhelming majority (70 percent) were not interested in politics, while a similar number (71 percent) felt they did not have any influence on the government of the day.

Another key finding from the poll was that some 40 percent of respondents were not registered as voters despite being eligible, saying they did not have time to register, or they felt that voting did not make a difference.

The Pakatan Harapan Youth wings from DAP, PKR, Amanah and Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Bersatu) should brainstorm to encourage greater youth participation and leadership in affecting the greatest political change in the nation's history with the

election of a Pakatan Harapan federal government in the 14th General Election to replace the UMNO/BN coalition.

I remember that when I was first involved in politics at the age of 24 at the end of 1965, the DAP was a political party for the youths.

In the first batch of 13 DAP MPs in the 1969 General Election, three MPs or 23 percent were below 30 years old, eight MPs (62 percent) below 40 years old, and two MPs (15 percent) below 50 years old.

This was why DAP did not form a youth wing until some five years after its formation, for the founding DAP leadership was very youthful.

Tunku Abdul Rahman's cabinet in 1957 was a fairly youthful one as well when compared to today's Cabinet. The average age of Tunku's Merdeka cabinet was 43.3. Tunku at 54 and finance minister HS Lee at 57 were the two oldest members, while education minister Khir Johari at 34 and deputy prime minister Abdul Razak Hussein at 35 were the youngest.

The present average age of the present Cabinet is 60, with over half of its members more than 60 years old. Najib is now 64, and became prime minister when he was 56.

Over 90 percent of Malaysia's 31 million people were born after Merdeka on August 31, 1957, with over half the population below 25 years of age.

Although we have a most extraordinary situation of having a 92-year-old nonagenarian in Dr Mahathir Mohamad as the chairperson of Pakatan Harapan, it is time for more youths to take over the leadership levels in all spheres of Malaysia's national life.

We have just celebrated the 60th anniversary of our attainment of Merdeka on August 31, 1957, when I was in Form Three in Batu Pahat High School.

I remember that the students in the school were assembled at the school padang, where the Merdeka Proclamation was read out.

However, we have failed in our Merdeka dream and vision to be a world-class parliamentary democracy; a successful and developed economy; a centre of educational excellence and a united, harmonious and progressive nation despite the diverse races, religions, cultures, languages in the country.

Malaysia has become a joke of a parliamentary democracy, where MPs are virtually prohibited from posing questions or debating the biggest financial scandal in the nation's history, the 1MDB scandal.

Economically, we have lost out to other countries which lagged behind us when we achieved Merdeka, in particular South Korea and Taiwan; in danger of being overtaken by Vietnam and Thailand; while other countries are swiftly closing the economic gap, like Indonesia.

Educationally, whether at university, or secondary and primary education, we have lost our international eminence, while in recent years, the voices of extremism, intolerance and bigotry have caused the worst racial and religious polarisation in the nation's history.

What is worse, we have been transformed overnight into a global kleptocracy because of the international multi-billion dollar 1MDB money-laundering scandal, with the prime minister only last week visiting the White House and meeting with President Trump.

This despite the US Department of Justice (DOJ) branding Najib a "kleptocrat" and "MO1" in the largest kleptocratic scandal in history, wherein US\$1.7 billion of 1MDB-linked assets in US, UK and Switzerland were forfeited.

Instead of clearing and cleansing his reputation to prove that he is not a "kleptocrat" and that Malaysia is not a "global kleptocracy," Najib went as a supplicant to the White House with three "value propositions" to strengthen the American economy to make

Trump's America "great again"!

Only political change in the forthcoming 14th General Election, with a change of the occupants in Putrajaya, can halt Malaysia's decline and save the country from the trajectory of a failed and a rogue state.

We must have a youthful cabinet, which must more attuned with the aspirations and problems of Malaysian youths.

The youths of Malaysia, regardless of race, religion, region or even politics, must be the vanguard of this imminent political change in Malaysia.

This is a tall order and a great challenge to the youth wings of Pakatan Harapan – to energise and inspire the youths of Malaysia to provide leadership for a great political change in the country!

LIM KIT SIANG is the DAP parliamentary leader and Gelang Patah MP.

*The views expressed here are those of the author/contributor and do not necessarily represent the views of Malaysiakini.*

**Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd.**

Source: <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/395820>