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iR Brief

What Malaysian Youths Ask of the Country

Findings from Malay, Chinese and Indian Youth Studies

Aziff Azuddin



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Malay, Chinese and Indian youths see the country from different positions, and on some questions, they want opposite things. On many others, they ask for the same: rules they can read, and institutions that respond when they act. IMAN Research interviewed 332 young Malaysians, most aged 18 to 35, between 2023 and 2026, in the Klang Valley and ten Peninsular states, with a few overseas. UNDI18 and automatic voter registration enlarged the electorate by about 40% between the 2018 and 2022 general elections[1], and the next election is due by early 2028.

Key messages

Economic precarity is shared; region and discrimination sharpen it. Youths in all three studies worry about wages, living costs and jobs. Those outside the West Coast, and Indian youths who meet discrimination in hiring and housing, carry more of the weight.

Schools mean something different to each community. Malay participants blamed vernacular schools for ethnic silos, Chinese participants saw them as where language and community are kept, and Indian participants remembered Tamil schools as a refuge from discrimination in national schools.

Contact reduces prejudice only on equal terms. Friendships across communities formed where youths met as equals, mostly at university. Indian participants described slurs and unequal treatment from teachers.

Minority belonging depends on recognition. On the East Coast, Chinese and Indian youths are accepted as local when they speak the dialect. In national debate, and in how Malay and Chinese participants speak of others, Indians drop out of view.

Where the state is absent, others organise youths first. Youth groups described funding that stalls with intermediaries, while party networks run programmes down to kampung level.

[1] Ostwald, K., 2024. *The Power of a Vote in Malaysia: Malapportionment Under UNDI18, AVR, and MA63*. ISEAS Perspective, 2024/30, 25 April. Available at: https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2024-30-the-power-of-a-vote-in-malaysia-malapportionment-under-undi18-avr-and-ma63-by-kai-ostwald/

Young women carry a second set of rules. Local restrictions on performing and weak protection from harassment fall on them, and two of the three studies found them harder to reach.

Government is judged on delivery and on what youths can find out. Participants remembered roadmaps with named targets and dismissed rebranding. Unclear admissions rules and unknown grants push youths out of public programmes.

Youths doubt that politics answers them. Many follow politics and vote; far fewer believe that taking part changes outcomes.

IMAN makes nine recommendations on this common ground. Each builds on a Malaysian law, bill or programme, and they are summarised in the table that opens the final section.

Methodology and evidence

This brief draws on three qualitative studies by IMAN Research[2]. *Orang Kita* (2025) began as an inquiry into why Malay youths swung towards Perikatan Nasional at GE15. *Kami Orang Sini Juga* (2026) extends the study to Chinese and Indian youths.

Study	Interviews	Fieldwork	Coverage	Male share
Orang Kita: Malay Youths	105	Aug 2023 – Mar 2024	Klang Valley and 6 Peninsular states, weighted to the North and East Coast	69%
Kami Orang Sini Juga: Chinese youths	116	Aug 2025 – Apr 2026	Klang Valley and 10 Peninsular states; 5 overseas	60%
Kami Orang Sini Juga: Indian youths	111	Aug 2025 – Apr 2026	Klang Valley and 10 Peninsular states; 3 overseas	53%

Each study used semi-structured interviews of 30 to 120 minutes, individually or in small groups, in the participants' languages. Samples were purposive, recruited through youth, religious, student, community and party networks, and ranged from the unemployed to professionals and from party members to the disengaged. The Chinese and Indian fieldwork ran in parallel, two years after the Malay study, under the same unity government.

[2] IMAN Research, 2025. *Orang Kita: Malay Youth Democratic Renewal Post-GE15 – The Politics of Acknowledgement and Resentment*. Kuala Lumpur: IMAN Research; IMAN Research, 2026. *Kami Orang Sini Juga: Chinese Youths and Democratic Belonging – The Politics of Pragmatism and Fairness*. Kuala Lumpur: IMAN Research; IMAN Research, 2026. *Kami Orang Sini Juga: Indian Youths and Democratic Belonging – The Politics of Precarity and Exclusion*. Kuala Lumpur: IMAN Research.

The findings explain how youths' reason; they do not measure how many hold a view. No sample is nationally representative. The Klang Valley is underweighted in the Chinese sample (10 of 116), and women are underrepresented among Malay participants (31%). Figures on the wider population come from published sources, cited in the notes.

Economic precarity, sharpened by region and discrimination

Money is the first worry in all three studies, and where youths live and who they are decide how hard the squeeze lands.

Malay youths named rising living costs, stagnant graduate wages and a thin job market, most sharply outside the Klang Valley. In Kedah and Perlis, where the state is the main employer, entry to the civil service felt gatekept; graduates were pushed into entrepreneurship without the promise of a stable income, and many entered gig work. Read against their own lives, positive national data told them that growth serves an urban elite.

Chinese youths weighed pay against belonging. One technician earns around SGD4,000 a month in Singapore, a wage he could not match at home, but described the daily motorcycle commute as dangerous, and hopes Malaysian wages will rise enough for him to work at home. Others saw cash aid as short-term relief that leaves wages and housing untouched.

Indian youths described the same pressures, compounded by job applications that went nowhere and rental listings that excluded them. Class divides the community: in the figures the 2017 Malaysian Indian Blueprint drew on, the top fifth of Indian households held 46.7% of the community's income[3], and those without family support have no buffer.

National averages hide the youths who described the sharpest squeeze. Regional development and fair access to jobs and housing belong in youth policy.

Schools: one system, three meanings

Each community learned something different at school, and no single reform of school streams answers all three.

Malay youths saw the education system as central to polarisation. "Since Merdeka, Malaysia has not built one identity," one said; children "don't mix from school to private university". Some called for vernacular schools to be abolished, and a single national

[3] Prime Minister's Office, 2017. *Malaysian Indian Blueprint*. Putrajaya: Prime Minister's Office. Figures for 2014, as cited in the Indian report.

system built. *Orang Kita* also records that the perceived Islamisation of national schools has made them less attractive to non-Muslim parents.

Chinese youths saw SJKC and SMJK schools as where Mandarin, community and continuity are kept. Their first sustained contact with Malay peers often came later, at SMK, matriculation or university. One student who scored well in formal Malay had to learn colloquial Malay "from scratch" in a matriculation class with two Chinese students out of twenty. Non-Chinese enrolment in SJKCs had risen to about a fifth by 2020[4], but Malay pupils without a Mandarin foundation struggle across subjects taught in it.

Indian youths described national schools as the place discrimination happened. In a 2021 survey by the Sekolah Semua movement, cited in the Indian report, nine in ten Indian respondents said they had faced discrimination at school because of their ethnicity, and they were as likely to name teachers (74%) as peers (73%)[5]. Tamil schools, by contrast, were remembered for teachers who "gave their lives to make us study".

What happens inside a school mattered more to participants than its type: Indian youths met prejudice in mixed national schools, and Chinese youths met few Malay peers until they left SJKC.

Mixing without equal standing

Putting youths from different communities in the same space reduces prejudice only when they meet as equals and authority backs that equality, the conditions Allport set out in the *contact hypothesis*[6]. Without them, contact can confirm hierarchy.

Malay and Chinese youths named university as the first place they formed real cross-ethnic friendships. Shared dorms, group work and daily routines turned formal contact into familiarity.

Proximity alone produced cordial, parallel lives. "Chinese at one table, Malays at another, Indians together," a Chinese participant said of secondary school. "It's not hostile. It's just how people naturally cluster." Friendships formed at school often ended at graduation.

The Indian study shows what happens when those in charge take sides. A Malay-language teacher asked a class, "You budak India ke budak keling?", sorting Indian pupils

[4] Chai, J., 2025. *Malaysia's Chinese Primary Schools: Saved yet Threatened by Rising Inflows of Malay Students*. ISEAS Perspective 2025/34. Available at: https://www.iseas.edu.sg/articles-commentaries/iseas-perspective/2025-34-malaysias-chinese-primary-schools-saved-yet-threatened-by-rising-inflows-of-malay-students-by-james-chai/

[5] Tee, K., 2021. *Survey: One in Two Malaysians Faced Discrimination in Schools, Ethnic Indians Had Worst Experience*. Malay Mail, 16 September. Available at: https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2021/09/16/survey-one-in-two-malaysians-faced-discrimination-in-schools-ethnic-indians/2006075

[6] Allport, G.W., 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.

into good and bad. Another participant was scolded after a fight in which five or six pupils attacked them and received an apology only when staff learned their mother was a teacher. A third was told by teachers that they would not be given a school position before they had even been interviewed.

Schools and universities need more than mixed enrolment. They need staff trained to recognise discrimination, a way for pupils to report it, and consequences when adults are the source.

Belonging on the majority's terms

Chinese and Indian youths are firmly Malaysian, but their belonging rests on recognition that others can give or withhold.

On the East Coast, dialect is the test. A Chinese business owner in Terengganu said Malay customers relax when the owner switches to the local dialect: "they know this is our people, *orang kita*". In Kelantan, where Indians are 0.3% of the population[7], Malay residents defend local Indians online: "Ini bukan India Kelantan. Ini India luar." *Orang Kita*, from the other side, records Malay youths holding up East Coast Chinese as the "model Chinese".

This recognition protects people, on conditions the majority sets. Two Kelantan Chinese participants who lacked the dialect were bullied and not treated as local; the Chinese report cautions that their cases may not be typical. Regional belonging shields minorities from national stereotypes by separating them from their co-ethnics elsewhere.

Nationally, Indians drop out of view. *Orang Kita*'s discussion of non-Malays is almost wholly about the Chinese, and Chinese participants rarely spoke of Indians unless prompted, often through second-hand stories. Indian youths feel the result: "As a Malaysian, I'm happy. But as an Indian, I'm so sad." A small group want to leave because of discrimination. Another participant, who had lived abroad, concluded: "Where else can I call home? I have nowhere else to go."

Policy that speaks of "Malay and non-Malay" hides a community with its own grievances, from rental exclusion to temple demolitions.

[7] OpenDOSM, 2025. *Kelantan: Kawasanku*. Department of Statistics Malaysia. Available at: https://open.dosm.gov.my/dashboard/kawasanku/Kelantan

Who reaches youths first?

A member of a registered youth organisation told us that of more than a thousand registered youth groups, only about fifteen are active. Funding from the Youth and Sports Ministry stalls with intermediaries; without money there are no programmes, and without programmes no one steps up to succeed the current leaders. A participant in Kedah pointed to the closure of the Balai Seni in Alor Setar, where a youth festival drew the Menteri Besar's objection in 2022, when he said "unruly" concerts would not be given space in the state[8]. Outside the towns, another said, young people are left with *pasar karats*, neighbourhood suraus and the masjid.

Where the state leaves a gap, someone else fills it. PAS has cultivated youth cadres for decades[9]. Its Unit Amal takes in members' children from secondary school, and a PAS-linked participant describing Terengganu listed Mobile Legends and PUBG tournaments and RXZ motorcycle gatherings among kampung-level programmes that, in his words, never stop. A Perikatan campaign volunteer said university students, unpaid, made the coalition's flood of online content in the 2023 state elections.

Chinese youths described the same dynamic in how they came to politics. With civic education thin, the Chinese study finds, the first trusted source that makes politics make sense (a parent, a commentator, a party) shapes how everything after it is read. The community institutions that once did this work are looking for a purpose. In Perlis, a Buddhist association worked with five other groups to hold a Mid-Autumn Festival for mainly non-Chinese audiences. It drew a full house, including Malay and Indian guests.

For Indian youths, the stakes are sharper. A dance teacher we met subsidises fees so that students who cannot pay still learn Bharatanatyam, alongside Zapin, Joget and the Chinese fan dance; her students say it lets them answer people who assume they know nothing. Young men spoke of football in the same terms. Where such spaces are missing, gangs offer money, a sense of security and older male role models to look up to. Another spent five months trying to get a DBKL contractor to meet him about repairing a hazardous public court and waited nine more for the work to be done.

The spaces that work were built by people with a stake in them (Recommendation 7); party pipelines are the subject of Recommendation 9.

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[8] Malay Mail, 2022. *Kedah MB Says No to 'Unruly' Concerts in State, Encourages Treasure Hunts, Fishing Competitions Instead*. Malay Mail, 3 October. Available at: https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2022/10/03/kedah-mb-says-no-to-unruly-concerts-in-state-encourages-treasure-hunts-fishing-competitions-instead/31415

[9] Liow, J.C., 2011. *Creating Cadres: Mobilization, Activism and the Youth Wing of the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party, PAS*. Pacific Affairs, 84(4), pp.665–686.

Young women carry a second set of rules

Two of the three studies found young women harder to reach. Only 31% of *Orang Kita*'s participants were women, which the mostly male fieldwork team attributes largely to young women's reluctance to sit one-to-one with a male researcher. The Chinese team noticed that women were more likely to decline once they heard the study was about politics, and more likely to open with "I don't know" before giving informed answers when asked more.

In Terengganu, a Chinese participant was stopped from singing at an event and replaced by a male student. In Kelantan, a Chinese family paid the local council a RM3,000 deposit for a wedding and was monitored throughout to ensure no woman performed; unsure what was allowed, the bride dropped the toasting ceremony. Several Chinese men in the same towns were surprised when the researchers raised these rules at all. One young woman compared Malaysia's women-only train coaches, where she felt the boundaries went unenforced, with Singapore's visible action against harassment. One Indian participant described colourism in family talk about which young women were marriageable.

Local regulation and weak protection fall hardest on young women. Recommendation 7 addresses safe spaces and permit conditions, and the data published under Recommendation 3 should be broken down by sex.

Government judged on delivery and on what youths can find out

Youths in all three studies measure government by visible change in their own lives, and where they cannot see the rules, they assume the worst or stop trying.

Some Malay youths praised the ECRL and TN50, the youth-centred national roadmap dropped in 2018, and several could not say what Ekonomi MADANI, the unity government's economic framework, is meant to achieve. A few Indian youths credited the 2017 Malaysian Indian Blueprint under the former Barisan Nasional government and remembered Samy Vellu as a leader who "would fight". Chinese participants saw the move from BR1M to STR as renaming while cost pressures stayed the same. What they miss is a roadmap with targets they can check, no matter which government wrote it.

Information gaps exclude youths as effectively as rules do. One Malay participant linked low PADU take-up in Perlis to the absence of direct communication, and others said the Nik Elin ruling was left open to bad-faith framing. Chinese youths often merged the 90% Bumiputera matriculation quota with UPU's merit ranking into a single "UPU quota"; some never applied to public universities, then read their absence as proof of exclusion. One

Chinese NGO leader learns about available grants from Malay counterparts. Some Indian youths had never heard of MITRA, whose allocation rose from RM100 million to RM150 million in 2026[10]; one who had applied was still waiting three years later and knew others who had waited seven.

Opaque rules breed suspicion. Indian participants could not tell whether rejections in hiring were about merit or race; one watched younger Malay colleagues promoted past her father for ten to fifteen years. Architects of Diversity found that 31.7% of Klang Valley room-rental listings excluded Indians[11], and DOSM figures cited in the Indian report put Indian unemployment at 3.8%, against 3.3% for Bumiputera and 2.0% for Chinese Malaysians[12].

Publishing criteria, intake data and eligibility costs little, and lets youths test a rule instead of assuming the worst.

Trust: following politics versus believing it answers

The Malay and Indian reports both use the word apathy, but what they describe is specific. Youths follow politics, mostly through social media, and many vote; what they doubt is that participation changes outcomes. Political scientists separate internal efficacy, the confidence to understand politics and act, from external efficacy, the belief that institutions will respond[13]. It is the second that is weak across all three studies.

Malay youths described fatigue with endless manoeuvring between government and opposition, and disappointment at reform promises they felt were broken. Turnout among first-time UNDI18 voters at GE15 was an estimated 79%, on par with voters in their 50s[14].

About 37% of voters under 30 backed Perikatan Nasional at GE15[15], a swing first read as an Islamist wave. *Orang Kita* reads it more as protest against instability, corruption and

[10] Sallehuddin, Q., 2026. *RM150mil Allocated for Mitra in 2026, Says PM Anwar*. The Star, 10 May. Available at: https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2026/05/10/pm-anwar-announces-rm50mil-extra-funding-for-mitra-in-2026

[11] Wee, J., 2026. *Analysis of Online Room Rental Listings Reveal Majority Are Racially Discriminatory*. Architects of Diversity, 12 March. Available at: https://www.aodmalaysia.org/post/analysis-of-online-room-rental-listings-reveal-majority-are-racially-discriminatory

[12] Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2026. *Labour Force Survey Report Malaysia 2025*. Putrajaya: DOSM. As cited in the Indian report.

[13] Campbell, A., Gurin, G. and Miller, W.E., 1954. *The Voter Decides*. Evanston, IL: Row, Peterson.

[14] Welsh, B., 2023. *GE15 Generational Voting: Looking Beyond Ethnicity*. Available at: https://bridgetwelsh.com/articles/ge15-generational-voting-looking-beyond-ethnicity-part-2/

[15] Welsh, B., 2023, op. cit.

living costs, answered by PN's promise of a "clean and stable" government. Islam mattered to many of these youths, but so did stability, corruption and living costs.

Chinese youths separated knowing how institutions work from believing they respond. Bersih and the Sheraton Move taught one participant that a government they voted in could collapse after "just a year and a half". Many adapt privately instead, by paying for another education path or working in Singapore; the Chinese study calls this *self-cornering*, knowing how to get around a problem but seeing no prospect of changing the decision behind it.

Indian youths inherit low trust from parents "tired of fighting" for fifty years. MITRA's weak reputation and representation offered to win Indian votes reinforce it. A minority went further: "I think the non-Indian politicians are actually representing us better." What they want is a representative who is visible and fixes things.

The Malay and Chinese studies both found civic education weak. None of the 116 Chinese participants could clearly recall what they learned in Pendidikan Sivik, and most Malay participants asked for political and democratic literacy to be built into the school syllabus.

Where youths disagree

On the place of Islam and Malay leadership in public life, the three communities want different things.

Many Malay youths want Islam strengthened in governance, some through broader Shariah court powers, and a few through Muslim political leadership that protects other communities on the model of the Madinah Charter. Some want a single, united Malay political front; one called for new Malay-Muslim parties to be banned. Some want vernacular schools abolished.

Chinese and Indian participants put the weight elsewhere: rules applied neutrally to all citizens, and admissions decided on merit and need. Chinese participants across regions questioned rules on alcohol, dress, gender-segregated facilities and Ramadan that they felt reached beyond the Muslims they were written for.

Common ground exists within this disagreement. Malay youths criticised elites who capture Bumiputera policies while ordinary families see little benefit. One Chinese participant accepted support for disadvantaged Bumiputera "in principle" while objecting to its current design. Both criticisms point to support that fails to reach those who need it.

On online speech, all three groups dislike what they see. Malay youths resent takedowns they read as censorship of anti-establishment views; Malaysia sent TikTok 2,606 removal requests in the first half of 2024, the most of any country, and 86% were acted on[16]. The Indian report points to an investigation by The Fourth that found influencer agencies willing to take payment for racist campaigns[17].

Policy cannot satisfy every position here. The recommendations below build on what the three communities share: support that reaches need, published rules applied evenly, and action against those paid to spread division.

Recommendations

IMAN makes nine recommendations. Most answer a finding shared by at least two of the three studies; Recommendations 4 and 5 answer discrimination documented mainly in the Indian study. Four can start within existing powers and budgets (1, 3, 4 and 7), though the permit review in Recommendation 7 needs state governments. Three need legislation or a change to standing policy (2, 5 and 6). Two depend as much on state governments and parties as on Putrajaya (8 and 9). Each extends a Malaysian law or programme already in place or in preparation, and each has been tried elsewhere.

#	Recommendation	Builds on	Lead
1	Rebuild civic education around real institutions and local problems	2027 curriculum; Election Academy	Ministry of Education
2	Publish admissions rules and intake; allocate matriculation by merit and financial need	April 2026 offer to all 10A candidates	Ministry of Education; Ministry of Higher Education
3	Make public programmes findable, with published eligibility and decisions	BUDI95 automatic eligibility; MITRA	MITRA; Ministry of Youth and Sports; Ministry of Finance
4	Protect pupils from discrimination by staff and peers	Anti-Bullying Act 2026	Ministry of Education; Tribunal for Anti-Bullying
5	Legislate against discrimination in hiring and rental housing	Employment Act s.69F; Residential Tenancy Bill	Ministry of Human Resources; Ministry of Housing and Local Government
6	Publish narrow 3R limits and place duties on organised hate	Online Safety Act 2025	Ministry of Communications; MCMC

[16] TikTok, 2024. *Government Removal Requests Report, January–June 2024*. TikTok Transparency Centre. Available at: https://www.tiktok.com/transparency/en-us/government-removal-requests-2024-1

[17] The Fourth, 2025. *We Tried to Pay Influencer Agencies to Post Racist Content. They Said Yes (Bad Influence)*. YouTube. Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jvRxLNoh3c0

#	Recommendation	Builds on	Lead
7	Fund youth groups directly and shared spaces safe for young women	Rakan Muda	Ministry of Youth and Sports; state governments; local authorities
8	Set a national roadmap with regional economic targets	RMK13; Parlimen Belia	Ministry of Economy; state governments
9	Open structured routes into party leadership for youths	Political Funding Bill	Political parties

1. Civic education

Teach, from primary school, who decides what citizens do and how they act, and add projects in which pupils research a local problem and take it to the body responsible. The 2027 curriculum already folds national and political education into Sejarah and Pendidikan Sivik and brings in the Election Academy to teach voting[18]; a local-project component would give that content something to act on. Pay Fong Middle School in Melaka runs a civics programme built on fieldwork in the town and could be studied as a starting point. In the United States, a study of 617 Generation Citizen students in 55 classrooms found gains in civic self-efficacy, with the benefits concentrated in projects where decision-makers were easy to reach[19].

2. Admissions: publish first, then allocate by merit and need

Release UPU selection criteria and intake by pathway every year, and review how STPM and matriculation results are compared. UPU ranks both at face value, though STPM runs 18 months and matriculation under a year, and figures cited by an MP in 2025 show matriculation graduates taking over 97% of 2023 places in medicine, pharmacy and dentistry[20].

Then replace the 90% Bumiputera allocation in matriculation with places awarded on merit weighted by household income, phased in and designed within Article 153. The April 2026 decision to offer places to all 6,717 SPM 2025 candidates with 10A or better,

[18] Berita RTM, 2026. *KPM perkenal kurikulum baharu secara berperingkat mulai 2027*. 11 February. Available at: https://berita.rtm.gov.my/nasional/senarai-berita-nasional/senarai-artikel/kpm-perkenal-kurikulum-baharu-secara-berperingkat-mulai-2027/

[19] Ballard, P.J., Cohen, A.K. and Littenberg-Tobias, J., 2016. *Action Civics for Promoting Civic Development: Main Effects of Program Participation and Differences by Project Characteristics*. American Journal of Community Psychology, 58(3–4), pp.377–390. Available at: https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC5654523

[20] Lee, B., Rahim, R. and Lai, A., 2025. *Fix Disparity Between STPM, Matriculation Students, Says Bayan Baru MP*. The Star, 14 August. Available at: https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/08/14/fix-disparity-between-stpm-matriculation-students-says-bayan-baru-mp

regardless of race, while keeping the quota[21], already lets merit override the allocation at the top; this recommendation carries the same logic down the income scale. Support would still reach low-income Bumiputera students, and poor non-Bumiputera students would no longer be shut out. The strongest objection is that the Bumiputera share of places would fall, so the ministries should first publish modelled intake by ethnicity and household income and let the argument be had over numbers. *Orang Kita* did not ask Malay youths about the matriculation quota, so their view of this change is untested. Brazil's Quota Law reserves half of federal university places for public-school students and half of those for low-income families, with shares in proportion to each state's population for Black, pardo, Indigenous and quilombola students. Since 2023, quota applicants compete in the open pool first, and universities report every year on access and completion[22].

3. Findable programmes

Publish eligibility and disbursement data for MITRA, youth grants and entrepreneurship funds in Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil, and give every applicant a decision by a stated date. The government already delivers one benefit without an application: BUDI95 eligibility is granted automatically by matching MyKad and licensing records across agencies, and 14.8 million of 16.5 million eligible people had used it by February 2026[23]; a single eligibility check for youth, MITRA and entrepreneurship schemes would apply the same approach. Singapore's SupportGoWhere lets residents check their eligibility for government support schemes in one place[24].

4. School safety

Train teachers to recognise and stop discrimination, and use the Anti-Bullying Act to make racial incidents, including those involving staff, visible. The Act, in force since 16 June 2026, lets pupils take a complaint to a tribunal when their school fails to resolve it[25].

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[21] Free Malaysia Today, 2026. *All 10A SPM Students to Get Matriculation Spots, Says Govt*. 8 April. Available at: https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2026/04/08/all-10a-spm-students-to-get-matriculation-spots-says-govt

[22] Brazil, 2012. *Lei nº 12.711, de 29 de agosto de 2012*, as amended by *Lei nº 14.723, de 13 de novembro de 2023*. Brasília: Presidência da República. Available at: https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2011-2014/2012/lei/l12711.htm and https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_ato2023-2026/2023/lei/l14723.htm

[23] Ministry of Finance, 2026. *Nearly 14.8 Mln Benefited from BUDI95 Petrol Subsidy as of Feb 28, 2026 – Amir Hamzah*. 2 March. Available at: https://mof.gov.my/portal/en/news/press-citations/nearly-14-8-mln-benefited-from-budi95-petrol-subsidy-as-of-feb-28-2026-amir-hamzah

[24] Ministry of Digital Development and Information, Singapore, 2022. *GoWhere Suite (Factsheet)*. Available at: https://www.mddi.gov.sg/newsroom/gowhere-suite-factsheet-02032022/

[25] Berita RTM, 2026. *Tribunal bagi Antibuli dilancar, Akta Antibuli 2026 berkuat kuasa hari ini*. 16 June. Available at: https://berita.rtm.gov.my/nasional/senarai-berita-nasional/senarai-artikel/tribunal-bagi-antibuli-dilancar-akta-antibuli-2026-berkuat-kuasa-hari-ini/

It already counts as bullying any act that humiliates or discriminates against a victim based on gender, race, religion or disability, and its definition does not restrict who the perpetrator may be[26]. The tribunal should confirm in its guidance that conduct by teachers and staff is within scope, and publish its cases each year by type. Britain's Stephen Lawrence Inquiry asked in 1999 that schools record every racist incident, report it to parents and governors, and publish the numbers annually, school by school[27].

5. Anti-discrimination law

Extend Section 69F of the Employment Act to cover job applicants, advertisements, promotions and renewals. Prohibit landlords and agents from advertising racial preferences or setting rents and deposits by race, and run periodic audit tests to measure compliance. Section 69F, in force since January 2023, lets the Director General of Labour decide discrimination disputes between employers and employees; the Peninsular Labour Department had received eight complaints by the end of September 2023[28]. The Residential Tenancy Bill, which the Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government told the Dewan Negara in August 2026 was still being finalised[29], is the natural place for the rental protections; IMAN found no public statement on the bill that mentions discrimination. In 2018 and 2019, France sent more than 10,000 paired job applications to 40 large firms, varying only a North African-sounding name or a poor address, and named the seven firms whose responses suggested discrimination[30].

6. Online speech

Publish what counts as a 3R offence, with the number and grounds of takedowns, so that legitimate criticism is not removed, and require platforms to act against paid, coordinated campaigns of racial or religious hate. The Online Safety Act 2025, in force since 1 January 2026, requires licensed platforms to publish an Online Safety Plan and to remove harmful content within set deadlines, and gives an appeal tribunal oversight of MCMC's

[26] Malaysia, 2026. *Akta Antibuli 2026 (Akta 876)*. Sections 3(2)(d) and 29. Available at: https://tab.bheuu.gov.my/storage/cms-downloads/akta-876-bm.pdf

[27] Macpherson, W., 1999. *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*. Cm 4262-I. London: The Stationery Office. Recommendation 68.

[28] Human Resources Online, 2023. *Malaysia Recorded Eight Complaints on Employment-Related Discrimination as of 30 Sep 2023*. Available at: https://www.humanresourcesonline.net/malaysia-recorded-eight-complaints-on-employment-related-discrimination-as-of-30-sep-2023

[29] The Star, 2026. *Residential Tenancy Bill Being Finalised to Balance Rights of Tenants, Landlords*. 4 August. Available at: https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2026/08/04/residential-tenancy-bill-being-finalised-to-balance-rights-of-tenants-landlords

[30] Mind RH, 2020. *France: Launch of a 2nd Tranche of Testing Aimed at Combatting Discrimination in Recruitment*. Available at: https://www.mind.eu.com/rh/en/article/france-launch-of-a-2nd-tranche-of-testing-aimed-at-combatting-discrimination-in-recruitment/

decisions[31]. Most 3R material falls under its category of content that may promote ill-will, hostility or disturbance of public tranquillity, and publishing takedowns under that category, with their grounds, would give the narrow limits a public record. Under the European Union's Digital Services Act, online platforms must give a reason for each removal and file it in a public, searchable database[32].

7. Youth groups and shared spaces

Let registered youth organisations apply for funds directly, not through intermediaries, and fund sports, arts, dance and community spaces where youths already gather, especially outside the Klang Valley. Pay for recurring activities that draw youths from more than one community. Design these spaces so young women can use them safely, and have state governments review permit conditions that stop young women from performing at community events. Rakan Muda reported 3.96 million participants in 2025[33]; tying part of its budget to activities that bring communities together would do much of this. Northern Ireland's Shared Education programme, funded with €33.1 million from the EU's PEACE IV fund, brought more than 92,000 children from mainly Catholic and mainly Protestant schools into shared classes by 2021; when Covid-19 moved those classes online, the share of practitioners who said children had made friends in them fell from 93% to 44%[34].

8. A national roadmap with regional targets

Set a decade-long plan, drawn up with youths, with named targets for wages, jobs and development outside the West Coast, and report progress publicly. The Thirteenth Malaysia Plan sets aside RM93.9 billion for less developed states and names Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang as food production hubs[35]. However, its published summaries carry no state-level wage or job targets that youths could track. Parlimen Belia already

[31] Mayer Brown, 2026. *Short Deadlines, Significant Penalties: Malaysia's Online Safety Act in Focus*. 3 July. Available at: https://www.mayerbrown.com/en/insights/publications/2026/07/short-deadlines-significant-penalties-malaysias-online-safety-act-in-focus

[32] European Commission, n.d. *DSA Transparency Database: Questions and Answers*. Regulation (EU) 2022/2065, Articles 17, 24(5) and 34. Available at: https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/faqs/dsa-transparency-database-questions-and-answers

[33] Utusan Malaysia, 2026. *Parlimen: 3.96 juta belia sertai program Rakan Muda tahun lalu*. 12 February. Available at: https://www.utusan.com.my/nasional/2026/02/parlimen-3-96-juta-belia-sertai-program-rakan-muda-tahun-lalu/

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gives 18- to 30-year-olds a chamber to debate housing, education and jobs[36], and IMAN found no published route for its resolutions to reach government; tying it to the RMK13 mid-term review would provide one. In Singapore, four youth panels of about 120 people aged 15 to 35 drafted 11 policy recommendations, and in April 2025 the government accepted the intent of all of them[37].

9. For political parties

Create mentorship and leadership routes for young members, including in branches outside the Klang Valley. *Orang Kita* found that only PAS and DAP run structured capacity-building for young members. The Political Funding Bill, expected in Parliament in 2027, will set rules on donations and reporting and create an independent regulator[38]; it could also require parties to report the age of their candidates and office-bearers. Tunisia's 2017 electoral law required a candidate under 35 among the first three names on every municipal list, and over half of the 2018 candidates were under 35[39].

Aziff Azuddin is the Research Director of IMAN Research with over a decade of experience in media, public policy, and urban sociology. He has published journalistic and research work across sectors including urban development, community, and the political economy of religion. In recent years, he has focused his research on youth and democracy, Islamist nationalism and right-wing politics, and Malaysian urban development. He is pursuing his PhD at the University of Nottingham Malaysia, where he studies how Muslim identities develop across socio-political settings.

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