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Malaysian youths are becoming more and more apathetic about politics. According to the Merdeka's Center National Youth Survey, it was suggested that 66% of young people believe that leaders and politicians "do not care", and 70% of them have little interest in learning politics. Another 78% stated that politics and governmental issues are too complicated. This begs the question of why political literacy is important and what can be done to prevent political apathy (Murad, 2022).

Why is political literacy important?

Political literacy is essential to get more young people involved in politics and to speak out on issues that impact them and the nation as a whole. Various issues such as education, healthcare, employment, environmental protection do impact the youths (Lee, 2011). Hence, their political literacy to make these informed decisions and opinions are pertinent. Greater attention would be paid to current affairs and how they can participate as much as possible. Young people's eagerness to contribute to the decision making process is shown by the growth of social movements like Undi 18, which advocated for the bill's approval. As mentioned by the Malaysian Bar, the act of voting is to support the democratic system and ensure that the core fundamentals of democracy are preserved. Therefore, participation by youths in politics may contribute to the improvement of our democratic governance (Lee, 2011).

When the Malaysian general election held in 2018 was won by the opposition, a large portion of it was due to the collective effort of young people. The significant involvement of young people, also known as the 'Kingmaker', which comprised 41 percent of all votes, was the primary cause for the overthrow of the Barisan Nasional (BN) administration, which had governed the country for the previous 60 years.

With that being said, youths are a valuable asset to the country as their ideas would make a huge contribution to the country's political growth and advancement. Would our young people want a unified school system? Policies that are not based heavily on race? A more equal social structure? What kind of society do they foresee for themselves¹?

With the advent of the Internet, there has been an increase in the engagement of young Malaysians in the country's social issues. Social media is essential for sparking essential dialogues and mobilising dramatic change (Herald, 2022). This was more prominent during the pandemic, where youngsters were more skeptical of the government, turning to the internet to hold authorities accountable. A new generation of political and social activists have emerged as a result of the two unelected governments that have ruled the country during the pandemic. For example, the Lawan movement organized by Sekretariat Solidariti Rakyat (SSR), which comprises activists such as Undi18's Tharma Pillai, Afiq Adib, and Muhammad Alshatri, and Bersih's Mohd Asaf Sharafi became a rallying cry against the government's inability to contain the pandemic. In July, frustration manifested itself in a series of generally peaceful demonstrations among young people. In the Lawan demonstration, the young protestors also demonstrated in favour of Undi18 and to protest the delay in implementing the legislation enacted by Parliament in July 2019 of reducing the voting age from 21 to 18 years old (M. Mustafa et al., 2022).

Furthermore, this will also guarantee that our country has the ability to develop young people into prospective national leaders by the age of 30. They are expected to have honed their leadership skills as young leaders by the time they turn 30 and are ready to take on greater responsibilities as district councils, members of parliaments, or senators (Ismail et al., 2016).

What can young people do to improve political literacy?

Young people can start improving their political literacy by staying informed about various current affairs. Being interested in politics allows young people

the opportunity to understand the plans of various political groups in relation to matters that affect them. Various steps towards being more informed on current affairs include following multi-partisan and independent youth-led movements dedicated to Malaysian youth's political awareness on social media and researching current affairs on the internet (Amirudin, 2021).

There are many independent organizations that aim to further raise awareness on political issues such as YPolitics, Youths.my, Parliwomen and The Loud Asians. Organizations like these help to educate the youth by taking political issues and simplifying them into infographics, making them easier to comprehend and grasp (Amirudin, 2021).

Additionally, it is also crucial for youths to research further on current affairs online. These days, information is more accessible than it has ever been via the Internet. Young people can take this opportunity and follow a wide range of news outlets. This allows them to read publications from all sides of the political spectrum in order to stay informed. They may get new insights on a given issue by reading a variety of sources and in turn help us better challenge our understanding and belief through comprehending other perspectives and viewpoints.

To sum it up, young people need to be more proactive in improving their political literacy and take action in keeping themselves informed. With the internet being so readily available, everyone is able to freely explore current affairs and make an informed decision when it comes to voting.

What can the government do?

Of course, the improvement in political literacy requires collective effort not just from the society but the higher ups. In order to enhance the political literacy of the next generation, experts recommended that school curriculums be overhauled. The necessity of voting and the election process should be taught early in school so that our youths have a solid foundation in politics and governance when they turn 18. Professor Rabi'ah Aminuddin of the Islamic University Malaysia also believes that civic education should be broadened to include the principles and responsibilities that come with being a Malaysian

citizen. This is critical for educating the next generation about their right to vote (Ahmad & Mohd Zain, 2021).

Political analyst Professor Dr Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani believes that educators' engagement in politics might promote political literacy by providing students with courses on voting, policy understanding, and social concerns. He argues that doing so would extend their perspectives, develop informed voters, and prepare them for political engagement in order to greatly contribute to democracy. However, he further stresses that comprehensive and clear rules regulating what teachers can and cannot do in politics should be developed (Ahmad & Mohd Zain, 2021).

Schools should also begin teaching students an impartial political education in order to combat this veil of intricacy. Progressive nations thrive on a well informed and critical populace. Youth participation in the formulation of national policy via direct conversations with legislators should be promoted in order to go beyond tokenism and increase representation. The country's political apathy among young people must be alleviated by a determined effort to combine the concerns of the young with government action to build a vibrant and resilient democracy (Arumugam & Radhi, 2022).

Conclusion

Political literacy among youths is crucial in ensuring continuous political improvement in our nation. In light of the recent Undi 18 bil, our young people are further encouraged to stay informed on current and ongoing social issues as being politically engaged in politics provides young people the chance to grasp the matters that concern them and make informed choices when voting. Moreover, the government can also contribute to the growth of political literacy of our future generation by introducing political education in our national curriculum.

We at MSGA believe in the immense potential our leaders of tomorrow have to affect our political climate. This can be achieved through the collective effort between the government and society as a whole, from staying informed on current social affairs to introducing compulsory political courses to our education system.

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