

Youth of the Nation

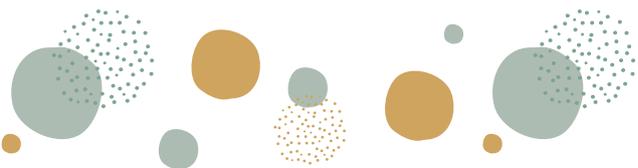
FOURTH EDITION

Hello and welcome back to our newsletter,

MASCA will be organising a webinar series named 'Suara Muda' throughout the month of August and we will explore the role of the youth in nation-building in one of the themes. One of the facets of nation-building is the citizens involvement in the political and democratic system of our country. Where do the Malaysian youths stand in this regard? This newsletter aims to foster meaningful discussions on this topic leading up to Suara Muda

Silence at Our Own Peril

The Malaysian youth (aged 15 to 39) constitutes about 45% of the total population in Malaysia. A subset of which (aged 21 to 30), who are eligible to vote and contest in general elections outnumbered the elder voters (over 60 years of age) by a significant proportion in the 14th General Election held in 2018. Despite this, the proportion of Member of Parliament (MP)s in the 14th Parliament below the age of 40 lies slightly below 30%, with the median age being 55.5. Furthermore, a Merdeka Centre survey in 2017 concluded that 70% of youth are uninterested in politics, citing several reasons such as trust deficits and complexity. In the same period, two-thirds of youths were yet to register as voters.



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These figures clearly portray the disproportionate representation of youths in the highest body of legislature of the country. It also highlights the increase in youth apathy towards policy making. By having low awareness and participation in politics, it would imply that those who do not represent the interests of the youth, who do not relate to our hardship and challenges, who would be of a completely different generation, would end up representing us. Consequently, our inability and inaction to be politically conscious and educated would have far-reaching consequences. One such example is the staggeringly high unemployment rate among youths which stood at an average of 11% in the last decade, which was partly due to the lack of emphasis of this issue in the top echelons of governance.

The Lost Generation

Naturally, the statistics compel us to reflect on the reasons that cause such a discrepancy. First and foremost, it is reasonable to look within ourselves for answers. Youths today are driven by academic responsibilities and career development. So much so that some believe that being educated about politics makes no difference, or does not contribute to their personal and professional growth. This is due partly to the fact that the tangible effects of decisions made in policy-making are not immediate. In other words, political decisions affect us in the long term, and gradual enough to be unnoticed in a matter of days, weeks or even months. In reality, the direction in which our country is heading is the product of government policies. Examples of such are the Malaysia Incorporated and the National Education Policy.

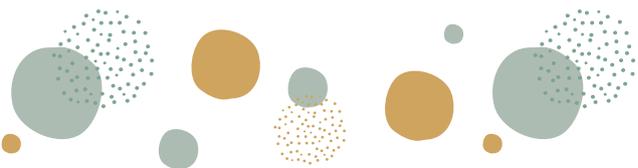


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If the youth possesses a greater understanding and intellectual capacity to engage in discourses about these policies, the government is more likely to take these discussions into serious consideration and tweak the ways in which these policies will be implemented. These changes have indirectly affected the matters the youth care about, such as the creation of career opportunities and the standards of living.

Many other external influences also indirectly affect the sentiment of youths towards participating in political discourse. There exist great misconceptions and mistrust from the older generations in Malaysia on young people. Many corporate and political leaders on one hand claim that the youths will be the future leaders of our country, however, when the youth intends to express their political viewpoints and ideologies, they are often regarded as naive. Other demands on the youth include the need to excel in their academics, establish their career and financial independence, all of which requires them to distance themselves from politics as it is perceived to bring no benefit. Another factor that induces an uncondusive environment for youth political participation is the highly controversial University and University Colleges Act 1971 that is known to induce fear among students in public universities to express their political views and participate in political activism. These factors clearly explain the disproportionate age demographics we see in parliament today.



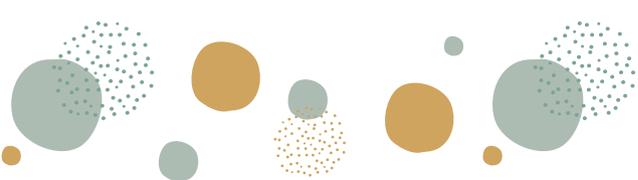
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Young, Energetic and Hopeful

Having identified the causes of poor youth awareness and participation in politics, one is compelled to ponder about the future of the youth, is there light at the end of the tunnel? In the backdrop of increasing social media prominence, the Malaysian youth have taken to these platforms to express their thoughts and ideologies. As such, an increasing number of young people have actively engaged themselves in activism in various forms, one of which has gained rapid traction is the Undi18 initiative, the call to reduce the voting age from 21 to 18 has garnered support from all walks of life and has been given bipartisan support in parliament. This phenomenon has signaled a gradual change in the perception of our youth about their role in nation-building.

Political entities increasingly realise the need to educate the youth on policy making and acknowledge their potential to dictate the outcome of future general elections. The new demographic landscape of the electorate brings a new slew of responsibilities on the young, they are now required to make decisions that determine the future of the country. It is a signal to us that we ought to educate ourselves politically so as to make sound decisions. We have now become the focus of our country, thus, as patriotic citizens, we must honour this responsibility.



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We should never underestimate our potential in making a meaningful difference, in leading our nation. Our generation is replete with information, knowledge and ideas, all of which are accessible in our fingertips. This creates a generation which is more educated than their predecessors, thus, we should not be afraid to stand among the ranks of our older counterparts. Although we make mistakes, we must learn from the wisdom conferred by our predecessors, and forge an inclusive future for many generations to come. Finally, remember that youth are not the future leaders of the country, but the current leaders.

The logo for 'Suara MUDA' features the word 'Suara' in a blue, cursive font above the word 'MUDA' in a blue, bold, sans-serif font. The 'MUDA' text is underlined with a white line. To the left of the text are several white, curved lines suggesting sound or motion.

MASCA invites all to our Suara Muda webinar series!

Check out for our webinar series Suara Muda on our Facebook Event Page throughout the month of **August**. Featuring four themes specially curated by MASCA National, the webinar will feature reputable speakers who are subject matter experts or have vast experiences in relation to the themes. It is definitely something not to be missed out on, so what are you waiting for?

Click [here](#) to get the latest updates on Suara Muda!



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MASCA wishes to remind Malaysians, home or abroad, to register as a voter and participate in our fundamental rights and responsibilities in our democracy.

Register as a voter [here](#)

Thank you for reading this newsletter!

We're excited to announce the launch of MASCA's official Telegram channel! Through the broadcasting service, we aim to deliver the latest information for Malaysians on flight availabilities back to Malaysia, government policies and procedures when returning home, and information on keeping yourself safe in Australia during these challenging times.

Subscribe to our channel [here](#)



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