

PERSPECTIVE

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Whither Institutional Reform in Malaysia?

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Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim (centre) during the monthly gathering of the Prime Minister's Department in Putrajaya on 11 December 2023. Picture: Facebook of Anwar Ibrahim.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- When Anwar Ibrahim formed the Malaysian government in November 2022, it was without the same high popular expectations as in 2018. His ‘Unity Government’ still has yet to articulate a comprehensive, agreed-upon platform or clear priorities, let alone achieve substantial reforms.
- In fact, the manifestos of the lead coalitions in the Unity Government overlap substantially, making a shared agenda for institutional reform feasible.
- Structural changes to the federal parliament after 2018—especially the introduction of special select committees and all-party parliamentary groups—facilitate wider input into policies. However, these innovations are structurally disconnected from formal policy processes. Key individuals exercise significant initiative in sustaining reform momentum.
- Further movement on institutional reform remains difficult for three primary reasons: the high bar to the types of reforms pursued, especially constitutional amendments; anxiety about another ‘Sheraton Move’ or electoral defeat, should reformers go too far or move too fast; and lukewarm commitment from top leaders.
- All told, we might understand Anwar’s administration less as a ‘reform government’ than as a government inclusive of reformists—but also of politicians and parties less inclined to diverge from the status quo.

TAKING STOCK

What has defined the coalition now known as Pakatan Harapan (PH), launched in 2015, since the days of Barisan Alternatif (1999–2004),¹ then Pakatan Rakyat (2008–2015), has been a declared commitment to systemic change. PH’s reform agenda has centred on political institutions, civil liberties and rights, anticorruption, and equity. It is through those pledges that the coalition has differentiated itself from Barisan Nasional (National Front, BN) and other contenders.

However, over a year and a half into the administration of Malaysia’s PH-led ‘Unity Government’, complaints proliferate about the lack of progress on institutional reform. Despite a few gains, such as passage of the Public Finance and Fiscal Responsibility Act (PFFR),² abrogating the mandatory death penalty, and at least steps toward greater separation of powers, a Freedom of Information Act, and revision of laws on ‘3R’ issues (race, religion, and royalty), progress has been limited. Farther-reaching reforms, such as those to electoral rules, are unlikely, expert recommendations notwithstanding. Moreover, the state still deploys laws it has promised to eliminate (e.g. the Sedition Act) and violations of freedoms of press, assembly, and expression persist.

When PH first secured a parliamentary majority, ousting BN, in 2018, it promised a ‘*Malaysia Baru*’: a new Malaysia of probity and progressive ideals. Institutional reforms were to be a priority.³ The new administration collected voluminous input, formed committees, and held consultations, but achieved comparatively little—a record arguably due at least as much to personal ambitions, factional rivalries, and hesitation to give the opposition any new advantages as to the government’s untimely collapse in 2020. The cross-sectoral CSO Platform for Reform, for instance, concluded that PH’s performance was ‘sketchy overall’, ‘sluggish’ in most areas, and retrogressive in some.⁴ Turf wars across ministries, overlapping or unclear jurisdiction and responsibility, or just uneven commitment among PH leadership, further complicated progress. The government’s fall then interrupted some efforts that were then well underway, such as sexual harassment and political financing legislation, and amendments to the Employment Act.

However chastened, PH’s ‘action plan’ for the 2022 general election, *Kita Boleh!* (We Can!), still foregrounded institutional reform.⁵ Recognizing that ‘the country’s reputation has been tarnished following several high-profile scandals’, the manifesto commits to ‘building a liberal and progressive pluralistic society, maintaining institutional reforms, raising the value of integrity, and respecting the independence of the judicial and legislative bodies’.⁶ It frames services even more than previously in terms of rights, for instance, for people with disabilities and for the indigenous Orang Asli. More broadly, PH presumes a role for a revamped parliament, building on structural reforms it implemented in 2018–2020.

PH promised to tackle corruption, from better vetting of the Malaysian Anti-corruption Commission (MACC) chief commissioner (and other key government appointees), to expansive requirements for asset-declaration, passage of a Freedom of Information Act, open tender for public procurements, better whistleblower protections, investigations into abuses of power and misappropriation of public funds, and more. Other promises, as in 2018, included executive term limits, separation of the offices of attorney general (AG) and public prosecutor,

a fixed parliamentary term and revived Parliamentary Services Act, a political funding act and equal access for all members of parliament (MPs) to constituency development funds, reduced malapportionment across electoral constituencies, expanded postal voting, and repealing ‘draconian’ provisions of acts that restrict free speech, including the Sedition Act, Communications and Multimedia Act, and Printing Presses and Publications Act. Now back on the agenda, too, after an absence: local elections, to ensure ‘more effective democratisation to protect the interests of the people’ against those of developers.⁷

However counter-intuitive the makeup of the governing coalition, the BN’s ‘PADU’ (*Perancangan Amal dan Usaha*) manifesto in fact overlaps with PH’s, even beyond development plans, albeit without PH’s language of rights, long-term neglect, and corruption as scourge. Notably, it sought explicitly ‘transitioning from race-based policy to needs based policy’,⁸ alongside improvements to governance, such as devolution of power to the states, separating the roles of AG and public prosecutor, and parliamentary scrutiny of key appointments. (The manifestos of partner coalitions Gabungan Parti Sabah, GPS, and Gerakan Rakyat Sarawak, GRS, unsurprisingly focused heavily on those states, though all coalitions offered enticements to lure these would-be kingmakers.)

Anwar announced in December 2022 that his government would form a committee,⁹ chaired by the chief secretary to the Government, to extract a common, ‘streamlined’ set of programmes from these manifestos. That seems not to have happened, beyond a unity-government MoU articulating broad shared principles—strengthening rule of law, safeguarding Islam and Malay language, pursuing sustainable and equitable economic growth, advancing women, etc.¹⁰ Further agenda-setting, let alone progress, has remained elusive, in a cobbled-together government haunted by past collapse.

WHITHER REFORM?

Lack of an articulated common platform leaves hazy what voters should hold this government accountable in 2027. PH’s and BN’s manifestos do align to an extent, but not completely, nor is it clear what measures, in what rank-order, they would set as collective priorities. At the one-year mark, NGO Bersih reverted to those manifestos, tallying what progress the administration had made toward reforms that just PH, or both PH and BN, had promised. Their overall grade is a failing 22%, including mostly points for good outcomes PH had not actually promised.¹¹ Some items then under discussion are moving glacially or seem irredeemably stalled.

Indeed, the broader political context might deter this administration from clarifying its core objectives. The fact of a robust Perikatan Nasional (PN, National Alliance) challenge from the ethno-religious ‘right’ has controversially tugged Anwar in that direction, and tensions within and between governing-coalition partners, including over policy priorities and directions, persist. Dismissal of corruption charges against United Malays National Party (UMNO) Deputy PM Zahid Hamidi, and ex-PM Najib Razak’s reduced sentence are especially telling: anticorruption, until now a core principle at least for PH, is no longer credibly so. Both these difficult compromises and the extent to which factionalism has sidelined rivals have increasingly detached PH from its oppositional history and reformist premises.

THE PARLIAMENTARY BACKDROP

Institutional reforms under the prior PH administration, however limited, especially in the *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Representatives), may increase the scope for change now. In particular, ten bipartisan parliamentary special select committees (PSSCs, see Table 1), each with a chair and nine members,¹² alongside five select committees (PSCs) on parliamentary affairs, are now part of the policy apparatus. They may discuss issues under any ministry, and as of this term, have research assistance, space, and funds.¹³ PSSCs ideally improve MPs' performance and provide avenues for both opposition voice and public participation, circumventing rubber-stamping of executive decisions.¹⁴ Indeed, the simple fact of institutional space to allow—even to oblige—cross-party debate and deliberation is undoubtedly a positive change, with potential at least to check increasing polarization.

However, these committees' remit to shape policies is unclear, particularly at what stage in the process they should review (or might introduce) legislation, and how much weight their assessment should carry. Legislation remains substantially top-down, with minimal debate, despite opportunity for line-item review. Government officials tend to be 'guarded' in speaking with committees, even though sessions are closed-door;¹⁵ that opposition MPs lead two PSSCs offers their voices, in practice, limited extra weight.¹⁶ Some committees do meet fairly regularly, present papers, and more.¹⁷ But as one chair explains, 'some of us are still struggling to find out exactly what the select committee can do'.¹⁸

Thus far, no bills have started from a select committee. For bills to emerge from committees, or even for deliberation on received drafts to start there, might weaken the executive. The usual praxis now is that Parliament passes 'without inputs' bills that the AG's chambers drafts per ministerial instructions, thus reducing parliamentary debates to theatre.¹⁹ Unclear commitment to furthering parliamentary restructuring might reflect the uncertainty such changes introduce. The anti-hopping law and anti-smoking legislation (the 'generation end-game' bill, GEG, referring to banning purchase of cigarettes by anyone born from 2007 on) under the second interim PN–BN administration (2021–22) have been the rare bills making use of committees, and even then with caveats. The anti-hopping law was a key element in the MoU that established that government, making any contribution by any committee to its passage debatable.²⁰ While then-Health Minister Khairy Jamaluddin made a point of engaging the PSSC for Health, however toothless, as a pre-emptive accountability mechanism and to cultivate support, the prime minister's calling for elections before Parliament could vote on the bill nullified any effect his effort could have produced.²¹ The anti-smoking act the Unity Government passed, instead, in November 2023—amid heated debate, and after being referred back to the PSSC—dropped the GEG component, without consideration for the extensive research of and endorsements from both PSSCs.²²

A PSSC can enter evidence into the parliamentary record by holding hearings and calling on NGOs or other experts—the PSSC on Human Rights, Elections, and Institutional Reform, under MP William Leong, for instance, is doing that with regard to splitting the AG from the public prosecutor, while the Minister for Law has also asked the AG's chambers to draft legislation. A 'painstaking' accounting of pros and cons can thus find its way into the Hansard.²³ Amending the standing orders to make PSSC hearings public is an idea that has been floated—and the speaker could effect that; however, this provision might strike fear

among ministers or officers called upon to testify.²⁴ Many MPs, too, do not bother to attend committee meetings, apart from the Public Accounts Committee—the only one that compels attendance.²⁵ Yet civil-society advocates see value to PSSCs as institutional access points, beyond known-sympathetic individual MPs.²⁶

But even seemingly simple reforms lag, like having a PSSC vet key appointments. Under the last PH administration, such vetting remained post-hoc, although the committee, which no longer exists, had established a process before the administration fell.²⁷ Even so, outside input *has* helped shape policies on such issues as the death penalty and sexual harassment, indicating that the committee system does function to some extent; having more time now to develop could help. Amending the standing orders to ensure all MPs are in at least one committee (fewer than half are now) may further strengthen the system, as should reinstatement of the Parliamentary Services Act (which is likely), to rationalise financing and staffing.²⁸

A set of All-Party Parliamentary Groups Malaysia (APPGMs) occupy similarly ambiguous stature. Malaysia's parliament now has four of these, with 4–14 members each from either chamber, plus chair and vice-chair, and extra-parliamentary official addresses (see Table 1). As in other Westminster parliamentary systems, APPGMs aim to bring voices from across the spectrum of opinion and expertise to policymaking.²⁹ Yet APPGMs lack teeth, even if, like PSSCs, they may increase MPs' awareness and understanding of how things work, or allow them to 'test the waters' on a policy idea.³⁰ Still, policy advocates see APPGMs as useful, allowing NGOs more space for agenda-setting and one-on-one informal lobbying than more 'performative' briefings for PSSCs do.³¹ Whether those inputs will make their way into laws that the AG drafts is a separate issue, not least since the AG's chambers rarely send representatives to meetings or accept draft bills from elsewhere.³²

These innovations offer at least some space for reformist initiatives which was lacking before 2018. The first APPGM established—on sustainable development goals (SDGs), in October 2019—offers a case in point. It allowed an informal coalition to develop a plan to 'localise' SDGs with micro-projects in cooperating MPs' constituencies, developed through community engagement; they have scaled up from projects in 10 constituencies in 2020 to a planned 30 in 2024.³³ That said, involving CSOs may also simply push the envelope—so someone else does the work—and trigger 'death by committee'.³⁴ Moreover, efforts on the ground may not feed back into the policy process, beyond socialising MPs toward new sensibilities.³⁵

Table 1. Parliamentary Committees and Groups, Dewan Rakyat (DR, House of Representatives) and Dewan Negara (DN, Senate), as of June 2024³⁶

| Parliamentary Select Committees | Chair | Vice/Deputy Chair |
|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| Committee of Selection | DR : House Speaker (Johari Abdul) DN : Senate President (vacant) | |
| Public Accounts Committee | Mas Ermieyati Samsudin (PN-Bersatu) | Wong Shu Qi (PH-DAP) |
| Standing Orders Committee | DR : House Speaker (Johari Abdul) DN : Senate President (vacant) | |
| House Committee | DR : House Speaker (Johari Abdul) DN : Senate President (vacant) | |
| Committee of Privileges | DR : House Speaker (Johari Abdul) DN : Senate President (vacant) | |
| Parliamentary Special Select Committees | | |
| Finance and Economy | Indera Mohd Shahar Abdullah (BN-UMNO) | |
| Health | Suhaizan Kaiat (PH-Amanah) | |
| Domestic Trade, Entrepreneurship, Cost of Living and Agriculture | Cha Kee Chin (PH-DAP) | |
| Infrastructure, Transportation and Communication | Yusuf Abd Wahab (GPS-PPBB) | |
| Nation Building, Education and Human Resources Development | Saifuddin Abdullah (PN-Bersatu) | |
| Women, Children and Community Development | Yeo Bee Yin (PH-DAP) | |
| Environment, Science and Plantations | Ahmad Amzad Hashim (PN-PAS) | |
| Security | Jonathan Yasin (GRS) | |
| International Relations and International Trade | Wong Chen (PH-PKR) | |
| Human Rights, Elections and Institutional Reform | William Leong (PH-PKR) | |
| DN : Governance, Integrity and Anti-corruption | Arman Azha Abu Hanifah (BN-UMNO) | Kesavadas A. Achyuthan Nair (PH-DAP) |
| DN : Social and Community Affairs | Mohd Hatta Ramli (PH-Amanah) | Nelson Renganathan (BN-MIC) |
| DN : Law Review | Rita Samirah Patrick Insol (PRS) | Mujahid Yusof (PH-Amanah) |
| All-party Parliamentary Groups Malaysia | | |
| Refugee Policy | Syerleena Abdul Rashid (PH-DAP) | Ahmad Tarmizi Sulaiman (PN-PAS) |
| | <i>Secretariat: Geutanyoe Foundation</i> | |
| Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) | Isnaraissah Munirah Majilis (PH-Warisan) | Saifuddin Abdullah (PN-Bersatu) |
| | <i>Secretariat: Society for the Promotion of SDGs</i> | |
| Political Financing | Wong Chen (PH-PKR) | Wilfred Madius Tangau (PH-Warisan) |
| | <i>Secretariat: Institute for Democracy & Economic Affairs</i> | |
| Integrity, Governance, and Anti-corruption | Syed Ibrahim Syed Noh (PH-PKR) | Mas Ermieyati Samsudin (PN-Bersatu) |
| | <i>Secretariat: RasuahBusters</i> | |

Arguably, even more important than these structures are key individuals—especially UMNO’s Minister in the PM’s Department (Law and Institutional Reform) Azalina Othman Said. She has floated the idea of establishing a Special Task Force on Institutional Reform to present proposals to the Cabinet, as well as an independent Law Commission to recommend revisions to keep laws relevant and effective.³⁷ Even under the last administration, in mid-2022, Azalina and then-PH MP Maria Chin Abdullah had launched a bipartisan Caucus for Multi-party Democracy,³⁸ seeking improvements to parliamentary processes. Issue-advocates now appeal to her directly: for instance, in the case of a January 2024 memo from the Centre for Independent Journalism and allied organisations on ‘a viable right to information regime’.³⁹ Azalina has touted, too, what the government *has* accomplished, like the Insolvency (Amendment) Act 2023.⁴⁰ Yet the source of Azalina’s specific proposals is not clear, nor who prioritises them and how.

Another such figure, lower-key, is aforementioned PSSC chair William Leong. With his committee, he advocates for signature PH promises, from political financing legislation⁴¹ to anti-corruption measures. On one evergreen point—separating the offices of AG and public prosecutor—Leong’s PSSC and Azalina announced the formation in September 2023 of two task forces; Leong’s PSSC then began consultations, including with the APPGM on Integrity, Governance, and Anti-Corruption and advocacy groups.⁴² (The minister’s outline of a two-year process of consultations and study on this issue, interestingly, does not name the PSSC.⁴³)

ROADBLOCKS TO REFORM

So why has not more happened? Three factors are especially germane.

First is the structural nature of reforms. The focus tends toward constitutional amendments; these are more challenging to pass or amend than regular legislation, since they require two-thirds rather than majority support. Yet there are options. Choosing to amend the constitution—as to confer citizenship on children born to Malaysian women overseas, currently under debate—opens the door to controversial addenda. PSSCs may help: Leong’s committee planned a fact-finding trip to East Malaysia, for instance, to understand relevant concerns, to inform debate.⁴⁴ But that pathway has yet to be formalised.⁴⁵ A different route is via the judiciary, which could strike down a law as outmoded or inappropriate; a case is now pending on the status of a Malaysian woman’s children. However, the High Court stalled those proceedings, with amendment of the law pending. More generally, reform via lawsuit ‘is always the last resort’, given its unpredictability.⁴⁶

A second issue is MPs’ mindset, in light of electoral realities. Experience of the past five years, plus the Unity Government’s tenuous mandate—it lacks strong support among the Malay majority—have left PH especially careful not to let its actions outpace popular buy-in. A PH MP who is himself committed to reform explains that they ‘have to really prioritise’, even though NGOs especially require expectation-management and some ‘early wins’ among ‘low-hanging fruit’ to appease.⁴⁷ Or as the head of Bersih put it, bluntly: ‘we can’t afford to have [another] Sheraton Move’ that topples the government.⁴⁸ That a proposal enjoys even strong support among reformists from across PH and BN cannot ensure that PN, nipping at the government’s heels, will not spin the issue so as to rally the opposition, or that factional rivals will not exploit perceived weaknesses—much as happened repeatedly during the first PH administration.⁴⁹

This time around, many Malay voters who chose UMNO surely ranked PAS, not PH, as second choice. ‘Practical politics’ thus suggests little point in pushing for more extreme or speedy reform; winning Malay voters’ ‘hearts and minds’ remains especially essential, however challenging this imperative may make it for PH to keep non-Malays on board in the interim.⁵⁰ Perhaps most problematic, Malaysians tend not to vote based on policy records, which limits the political payoff for spending time on legislation.⁵¹ Lacking funds to coopt or distract critics with patronage, the Unity Government may prefer simply not to rock the boat.

The third and final factor is the other side of large-looming personalities: Anwar as PM. Multiple informants mention Anwar’s lukewarm engagement.⁵² Even sympathetic respondents note his failure to read briefing materials or other documents, haphazard preparation for

parliamentary questions, cancelled or abbreviated consultations and meetings, and short-term, transactional mindset, such that all is about staying in power and satisfying paranoia. Meanwhile, they complain, he takes on more than he can handle, as by making himself finance minister, then being unable to get cheques out on time. His inclination, too, is to rely on an inner circle, largely dating back to 1998, or his family. (Daughter Nurul Izzah Anwar stepped down as an unpaid ‘special adviser’ to Anwar in his role as finance minister after charges of nepotism early on—among “‘self-inflicted potholes’ ... on the road to reform’, per one political-risk analyst⁵³—but by all accounts, remains at the centre of this circle.) That approach has unhelpfully sidelined really competent people even from his own party.

All told, recent past history suggests how Malaysia has gotten to this point, but the prognosis is not great. The Unity Government may well stay in power, but seems satisfied to do little more than that, making its future support—and Malaysia’s future path—uncertain.

ENDNOTES

¹ The Democratic Action Party (DAP) withdrew in 2001.

² The PFFR, which aims at lowering the fiscal deficit and keeping debt in check, is less than optimally potent or ambitious. Among other provisions, it increases parliamentary oversight of the Ministry of Finance and its fiscal metrics, requires annual publication of a mid-year expenditure report to track budget performance, and introduces fiscal-risk-management strategies, including limiting government guarantees for off-budget contingent liabilities. However, the PFFR does not extend to all government-linked corporations (GLCs), which play an outsized, poorly regulated role in Malaysia; does not guarantee MPs full ready access to information their scrutiny requires; and could more aggressively and clearly constrain debt and liabilities. Interview with Tricia Yeoh (CEO, Institute of Democracy and Economic Affairs, IDEAS), Zoom, 16 January 2024; <https://www.ideas.org.my/ideas-public-finance-and-fiscal-responsibility-act-a-welcome-start-regular-review-required-for-meaningful-impact/>; <https://theedgemalaysia.com/node/685670>; and <https://theedgemalaysia.com/node/687179>.

³ Cassey Lee, ‘Making Sense of Malaysia’s Institutional Reforms’, *ISEAS Perspective* 2018, no. 79, 11 December 2018.

⁴ CSO Platform for Reform, *Analysis Report: Pakatan Harapan’s 22 Months & Perikatan Nasional’s First 100 Days*, Petaling Jaya: Pusat KOMAS (2020), <https://komas.org/download/CSO-analysis-report-Final-printing-copy.pdf>.

⁵ For a synopsis of each contender’s offerings, see Lee Hwok Aun, ‘Malaysia’s GE-15 Manifestos: Wading Through a Flood of Offerings’, *ISEAS Perspective* 2022, no. 113, 15 November 2022.

⁶ <https://kitaboleh.my/en/harapan-action-plan/>, p. 92-93.

⁷ <https://kitaboleh.my/en/harapan-action-plan/>, p. 84.

⁸ <https://umno-online.my/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/BM-PADU.pdf>, p. 31.

⁹ <https://www.theborneopost.com/2022/12/26/analysts-unity-govt-faces-yet-another-test-in-bid-to-combine-poll-manifestos/>

¹⁰ <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/asia/malaysia-coalitions-sign-agreement-anwar-ibrahim-unity-government-3149821>

¹¹ <https://www.malaysiakini.com/columns/687571>

¹² <https://anfrel.org/bersih-welcomes-the-establishment-of-the-psscs-even-though-it-does-not-involve-all-members-of-parliament/>

¹³ <https://malaysia.news.yahoo.com/parliamentary-special-select-committees-now-104838589.html>

¹⁴ Interview with PSSC chair (PH MP), Petaling Jaya, 2 January 2024.

¹⁵ Interview with PSSC chair (PN MP), 29 December 2023, Petaling Jaya.

- ¹⁶ PH initiated appointing an opposition chair also for the Public Accounts Committee in 2018; both subsequent PN–BN administrations (2020–2021/2021–2022) maintained that practice.
- ¹⁷ PN, too, has a set of 26 ‘portfolios’ they established as a sort of shadow cabinet, intended to meet monthly, but most have seldom met.
- ¹⁸ Interview with PSSC chair (PN MP), 29 December 2023, Petaling Jaya.
- ¹⁹ Chin-Huat Wong, ‘Parliament as Prime Minister’s Electoral College: The Defection Game in Malaysia’s Democratic Backsliding’, *The Round Table* 109, no. 5 (2020), p. 591.
- ²⁰ The law has its weaknesses, including allowing MPs whom their parties sack to retain their seats as independents—an issue Bersatu now has to manage. See <https://anfrel.org/bersih-hails-the-passing-of-the-anti-hopping-amendments-but-more-reforms-needed/>;
<https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/708243>.
- ²¹ Interview with Khairy Jamaluddin (UMNO), Kuala Lumpur, 5 January 2024.
- ²² Critics on both sides of the aisle alleged influence from ‘Big Tobacco and the vape industry’ to be behind the sudden shift in tack. Boo Su-Lyn, ‘Tobacco Bill passed at the cost of GEG and democracy’, 30 November 2023, <https://codeblue.galencentre.org/2023/11/30/tobacco-bill-passed-at-the-cost-of-geg-and-democracy/>.
- ²³ Interview with William Leong (Parti Keadilan Rakyat, PKR), Petaling Jaya, 2 January 2024.
- ²⁴ Interview with PSSC chair (PH MP), Petaling Jaya, 2 January 2024.
- ²⁵ Interview with former cabinet minister (BN), Kuala Lumpur, 5 January 2024.
- ²⁶ Interview with Faisal Aziz (chair, Bersih), Petaling Jaya, 2 January 2024.
- ²⁷ Interview with PSSC chair (PH MP), Petaling Jaya, 2 January 2024.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ Danial Mohd Yusof and Zainal Abidin Sanusi, ‘The APPGM-SDG (All Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia for Sustainable Development Goals): Towards Mainstreaming SDG in Issues and Solutions of Parliamentary Constituencies’, *Journal of the Malaysian Parliament* 1 (2021), pp. 229-32.
- ³⁰ Interview with former PH MP, Kuala Lumpur, 2 January 2024.
- ³¹ Interview with Faisal Aziz, Petaling Jaya, 2 January 2024.
- ³² Interview with Edmund Bon (lawyer and human rights advocate), Kuala Lumpur, 6 January 2024.
- ³³ Interview with Kiu Jia Yaw (lawyer and APPGM resource person), Kuala Lumpur, 28 February 2024; <https://appgm-sdg.com/constituencies-with-sdg/>.
- ³⁴ Interview with Tricia Yeoh, Zoom, 16 January 2024.
- ³⁵ Interview with Kiu Jia Yaw, Kuala Lumpur, 28 February 2024.
- ³⁶ Official Portal of Parliament of Malaysia, <https://www.parlimen.gov.my/jkdr/>,
<https://www.parlimen.gov.my/jawatankuasa-dn.html?uweb=dn&>,
<https://www.parlimen.gov.my/jawatankuasa-dr.html?uweb=dr&>, accessed 8 June 2024
- ³⁷ <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2022/12/12/039now-the-hard-work-begins039-says-azalina-as-she-sets-sights-on-law-commission-institutional-reform-task-force>
- ³⁸ <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/628925>
- ³⁹ Centre for Independent Journalism, Center to Combat Corruption and Cronyism, Sinar Project, and ARTICLE 19, ‘Memorandum to Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Law and Institutional Reform) YB Dato’ Sri Azalina Othman Said’, 23 January 2024, https://www.article19.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/FINAL_RTI-Memorandum-to-Minister-of-Law-and-Inst-Reform-DS-Azalina-Othman_23-Jan-2024.pdf.
- ⁴⁰ The new law addresses emerging from bankruptcy, legal aid, and online scams: <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/12/05/legislation-in-2024-to-be-people-centric-says-azalina>
- ⁴¹ https://thesun.my/local_news/william-leong-select-committee-did-not-summon-sitting-ex-ag-FN11494098
- ⁴² <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/09/12/azalina-govt-agrees-to-form-two-task-forces-to-expedite-reforms-over-splitting-ags-dual-role/90457>;

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2023/11/973978/special-select-committee-begin-held-two-sessions-dividing-roles-g-and>

⁴³ <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2024/04/02/azalina-govt-launches-power-separation-initiative-for-legal-reform-first-empirical-study-to-take-place-in-canada-in-may/126935>

⁴⁴ Interview with William Leong, Petaling Jaya, 2 January 2024.

⁴⁵ Interview with former PH MP, Kuala Lumpur, 2 January 2024.

⁴⁶ Interview with Edmund Bon, Kuala Lumpur, 6 January 2024.

⁴⁷ Interview with PSSC chair (PH MP), Petaling Jaya, 2 January 2024.

⁴⁸ Interview with Faisal Aziz, Petaling Jaya, 2 January 2024.

⁴⁹ Wong, op cit., pp. 595-596.

⁵⁰ Interview with PSSC chair (PH MP), Petaling Jaya, 2 January 2024.

⁵¹ Interview with PSSC chair (PN MP), Petaling Jaya, 29 December 2023.

⁵² Among respondents who offered such critical assessments of Anwar’s working style and resistance to input during the course of this research were current or former legislators from Bersatu, DAP, PKR, and UMNO, and researchers from three prominent, policy-engaged Malaysian think tanks. Activists from CSOs offered similar critiques, but tended to focus more on his and his cabinet members’ policy priorities and statements—most obviously, a seeming ‘rightward’ tilt, apparently to undercut an Islamist challenge.

⁵³ <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3208751/malaysias-anwar-fires-back-against-nepotism-claims-after-giving-daughter-job>

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