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## Foreword from the Co-Secretariats

It is our pleasure to present the 'One Year of the Unity Government Report' by the CSO Platform for Reform. This report is a testament to the transformative power of dedicated leadership and the collective efforts of civil society organisations (CSOs).

The CSO Platform for Reform, a coalition of more than 60 civil society organisations based in Malaysia, has been monitoring the government's performance through four core focuses: governance leadership reform, institutions reform, parliament and state legislative assembly reform, and key laws and policies reform.

While this report commends the government's efforts in abolishing the mandatory death penalty, the setting up of 10 Parliamentary Special Select Committees, the tabling of SUHAKAM Act, and the government's commitment to improving the quality and accessibility of existing legal aid programmes, particularly for the B40 group; we also take note that more consultations and engagements with the civil society are necessary, as a signal that CSOs are relied upon as trustworthy and strategic partners.

We would like to convey our gratitude to all members of the CSO Platform for Reform for their continued support and solidarity. Institutional reform is a continuous journey, and as we move forward, it is crucial to address these concerns to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of our institutions.

In conclusion, we hope this report will serve as a beacon, illuminating our path towards a more equitable, just, and prosperous society. It is our hope that it will inspire continued commitment to our shared vision and provide valuable insights for the journey ahead.

Thank you.



**Jerald**



**Sevan**

## **Preamble**

With a sharper focus on institutional reform through the four core focus, and the recognition of CSO Platform for Reform as a reform group further enhance the relevance of the platform and the reform agenda work that we do to contribute to the nation building efforts. The engagements directly empowered the members of the CSO Platform as more activities were carried out.

From October 2022 to October 2023, the Platform was able to engage better with Anwar Ibrahim's government at 36%; compared to 17% for the same duration of 12 months (October 2021 to October 2022) in Ismail Sabri's government. This is a 19% increase in strategic activities, which showed that the space for reform agenda discussion is more encouraging, and that it is a better time for civil society to engage with stakeholders.

CSO Platform for Reform hopes to continue the uptrend in strategic engagements with the Madani government and government agencies, to organise capacity building, advocacy and community outreach programmes to ensure that institutional reform is not just discussed at the policy making levels, but to be inclusive and uphold the peoples' voices to ensure that no one is left behind.

## **Executive Summary**

The CSO Platform took it upon themselves to monitor the performance of the Madani government during their first 100 days in power and later published the first 100-day report in March 2023. The preliminary 'report card' serves as a check and balance measure against the new government and what the public can expect from the administration. The 100-day CSO Platform's report highlighted some areas of concern in the Madani government's performance. One major issue identified was the slow progress in repealing draconian laws, which continued to be used to trample freedom of expression and speech. Additionally, the report pointed out the lack of progress in tackling corruption and improving transparency within the government. The CSO Platform also expressed disappointment with the government's performance within the first 100 days; however, the report concluded that there is room for improvement and urged the government to take swift action in addressing these pressing concerns.

Granted, during the initial 100 days, the government's focus was ensuring political stability within its newly formed unity government while managing public expectations, which may have influenced the pace and scope of reform initiatives during the initial 100 days of his premiership. It has been one year since the 15th General Election saw Anwar Ibrahim take an oath as Malaysia's 10th Prime Minister. The CSO Platform is now reporting what else is amiss and what progress has been made since the last 100 days. This report is the culmination of the monitoring and reporting process of the Prime Minister and the government during their 12-month tenure.

Progression in the direction of the CSO Platform, which is centred on four core priority areas—reform of key laws and policies, institutions, parliament and state legislative assemblies, and governance leadership—has been significantly slower than anticipated. The performance of the Madani administration during its inaugural year in office was lukewarm, with only minor reforms documented. As a result of the government's criticised inability to implement much-needed

reforms and address the economy, public disillusionment has increased, and the Prime Minister's approval rating has dipped to 50%. The Malaysian economy has expanded at a sluggish rate, and inflation has been creeping up. The Madani government must exert considerably more effort to ensure that more substantial reforms are implemented. Already, proposals for regressive legislation, such as citizenship laws, are considered to be tabled in Parliament. Legislation that stifles criticism and dissent remains in effect, and the Malaysian government has encountered persistent challenges in effectively addressing corruption and accountability concerns.

## **Introduction**

One hundred days after the formation of a unity government, the Madani government, led by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, continued to affirm its dedication to addressing concerns of racism and religious intolerance, anti-corruption, and effective governance. The expectation of his supporters is that his administration will introduce moderation and stability to Malaysia.

Building on the 100-day report, which will serve as the foundation for this report, it will assess favourable accomplishments, ongoing initiatives, gaps, and missteps based on the four key priority areas of which the CSO Platform is focusing: governance leadership reform, institutions reform, parliament and state legislative assembly reform, and key laws and policies reform. The four core themes will guide the report analysis in addition to the collective recommendations, in hopes of supplementing and informing the government's work through the aspirations of people on the ground.

## **Madani Government - Reforms After 100 days**

### **Governance Leadership Reform**

With a focus on corporate governance and good governance, the Madani government has taken steps to address governance and leadership reform. However, there have been some questions about the government's commitment to action on governance and leadership reform. Some have dubbed the government "no action, only talk," noting delays in promised reforms and a perceived lack of progress in meeting commitments.

Irrespective of criticism, Anwar Ibrahim was adamant in defending his decision to helm the finance minister's post. In response to a question in the Dewan Rakyat from Datuk Dr. Radzi Jidin (PN-Putrajaya), he stated,

*"Throughout our nation's history, it has never been a problem for a prime minister to helm the finance portfolio." The difficulty emerges when the position is abused to steal the money of the people, as was done by many in the 'clean' circles, whether on this side (the administration) or on the other side (the opposition).*

Yet another misstep that drew widespread criticism: Zahid Hamidi remains the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Rural and Regional Development in lieu of corruption allegations

involving the misuse of funds from a charity foundation called Yayasan Akalbudi. Subsequently on September 4, 2023, Malaysia's High Court granted a request from prosecutors to drop all corruption charges, for which the court granted him a discharge not amounting to an acquittal (DNAA). The dismissal of corruption allegations against him has raised criticism and brought into question the government's approach to corruption cases involving senior politicians, especially the perception of political meddling in court proceedings. Members of civil society and reformists have also criticised the decision, expressing dismay and urging the prosecution to provide a more complete reason.

Meanwhile, the Kuala Lumpur High Court recently found Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman, a Muar member of Parliament, guilty of corruption. He was found guilty on four counts: criminal breach of trust, misuse of property, and money laundering. The charges stemmed from the misuse of funds belonging to Angkatan Bersatu Anak Muda (Armada), the youth wing of Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia, where he previously served as its chief. He was convicted to seven years in prison, fined RM10 million (about US\$2.1 million), and given two cane strokes. The trial and punishment have aroused public debate and scrutiny, with some commentators criticising the sentence's proportionality and the potential political ramifications.

On January 3, 2023, Nurul Izzah Anwar, the daughter of Anwar Ibrahim, was named Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister on Economics and Finance. Because of concerns about nepotism and questions about her qualifications for the position, this appointment attracted controversy and public attention. Nurul Izzah, a vice president of the Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR), lost her parliamentary seat in the national elections in November 2022. Despite Anwar Ibrahim's defence of her selection, the controversy surrounding the appointment forced Nurul Izzah to resign as Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister on Economics and Finance barely over a month after her appointment. Following her resignation, Nurul Izzah was invited to co-chair a secretariat advising the Finance Minister, a departure from her former post. Her brief career as Senior Advisor to the Prime Minister on Economics and Finance came to an end with this announcement.

On more positive notes, the government has advocated for more women to be assigned to decision-making roles in the corporate sector in response to having more women in decision-making positions at all levels. The government has also mandated the appointment of at least one female director for all public listed companies, effective September 1, 2022 for large capital corporations and June 1, 2023 for smaller listed companies. The Women Leadership Foundation (WLF) has urged the government to require all public-listed companies to have 30% female representation in decision-making roles in order to meet the target sooner.

Continuing the government's commitment to improving the quality and accessibility of existing legal aid programmes, particularly for the B40 group, Malaysia is now proposing a Public Defenders Act, which seeks to improve criminal legal aid services and empower legal aid services for those who may not be able to afford legal representation. A comprehensive study is currently conducted in collaboration with academicians from law faculties of 10 public and private higher learning institutes nationwide. The findings of this study are expected to be available by the end of 2023.

The Independent Police Conduct Commission (IPCC) in Malaysia has been the subject of significant developments in 2023. The IPCC is intended to address complaints about police conduct and is expected to have the authority to accept, consider, and gather evidence about any written allegation of wrongdoing made by any individual against any member of the police force. However, there have been grave concerns raised about the IPCC's authority and its ability to uphold police accountability, with the Malaysian Bar calling it as "toothless" particularly in comparison to the IPCMC. Nevertheless the IPCC Act 2020 has come into force in June 2023 as scheduled.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's "Madani Economy" narrative aims to give the public a more positive impression of his economic leadership. This narrative is a component of an evolving **economic policy framework** that is based on the Madani concept, which emphasises fair, equitable, and people-led economic growth and development. The framework aims to strengthen and boost Malaysia's economy for a period of ten years, with a focus on fair, equitable, and people-led economic growth, expansion, and distribution of wealth. The enactment of the Fiscal Responsibility Act (FRA) on October 11, 2023, is a fundamental reform to support the framework by improving governance and transparency in managing public finances and fiscal risk, particularly in respect to revenue, expenditure, loans, and debt.

Budget 2024, that reflects the Madani framework, with a focus on inclusive and sustainable economic growth, institutional reform, and corruption combat, highlights steps to encourage businesses, accelerate infrastructure projects, and prioritise the digital agenda, all of which match with the Madani Economy framework's goal of building a better Malaysia and establishing the country as an Asian economic leader.

Notwithstanding, the Malaysian ringgit has "fallen to its lowest level since the 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis..is the worst performing currency in Asia", as reported in New Straits Times.

## **Institutions Reform**

The efforts to reform institutions by the Madani administration remain ambivalent even after a year has passed. The government's proposal to place the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) under the supervision of the Enforcement Agency Integrity Commission (EAIC) received strong opposition from CSO Platform, where the "coalition strongly believes that this move contradicts the spirit of institutional reform". This proposal has been the subject of ongoing scrutiny and study by the government. The idea is to potentially integrate the MACC into the schedule of the EAIC Act 2009, which currently lists 21 enforcement agencies.

The proposal has sparked discussions about the need to strengthen the EAIC and reform the MACC. Proponents of this move argue that it could enhance the oversight and integrity of the MACC, which plays a crucial role in combating corruption in Malaysia. CSO Platform is of the view that placing the MACC under the purview of the Malaysian Parliament for the purpose of accountability and transparency and staying consistent with the Prime Minister's aspiration to ensure transparency and independence of the MACC.

The Attorney General's Chambers (AGC) requested a Discharge Not Amounting to Acquittal (DNAA) for Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi even after a *prima facie* case against Zahid Hamidi had already been established, which was granted by the High Court in Kuala Lumpur and raised a serious call for comprehensive explanation to the public, "as it raises clear questions about the motives and reasons behind this step". The Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi was DNAA on all 47 corruption, criminal breach of trust (CBT), and money laundering charges after a four-year trial at the High Court.

The Madani Government's commitment to the separation of powers between the Attorney General (AG) and the Public Prosecutor (PP) in Malaysia is noted in the 100-day report, where Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department, outlined it as one of their top reform priorities. She has also highlighted the government's commitment to this division in order to protect the integrity of the legal institution. Azalina has also indicated that the government is committed to establishing fairer governance and has criticised the opposition for not implementing the separation of powers between the AG and PP when they were in power before. According to Azalina, a proactive approach to this reform is to conduct an empirical study on the separation of AG and PP powers within a year. Additionally, there are calls for the government to publicly declare a timeline for the separation by 2025, with the appropriate financial allocations to be budgeted for in the 2025 budget.

In a report by MalayMail in October 2023, Azalina said that the government plans to present the Children's Commission Bill to the cabinet together with the SUHAKAM Act because they intend to make amendments to that act. An amendment to the SUHAKAM Act was finally passed on November 29, 2023, where a Chief Children Commissioner ("CCC") and Children Commissioners are established pursuant to Section 4. Unfortunately no mention of the status of the Children's Commission of Malaysia Bill, which seeks to create an autonomous Children's Commission endowed with greater authority to advocate the rights, wellbeing, and interests of children.

While the CSO Platform applauded the passing of the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (Suhakam) Act, the amendments relating to the SUHAKAM commissioner's ability to conduct visits will not be adequate. SUHAKAM is still subject to the existing bureaucracy, and they are not able to visit unannounced as a result of conducting evidence of human rights violations.

Having considered the establishment of a public ombudsman, the press statement made by Azalina's office on June 14, 2023, demonstrated the ongoing commitment to establish Ombudsman Malaysia, which is set to replace the Public Complaints Bureau (PCB) and boost transparency and accountability in the country. In May 2023, the Legal Affairs Division (BHEUU) and Public Complaints Bureau (BPA) conducted multi-sectoral stakeholder engagements to collate feedback and recommendations. Although the Ombudsman Bill was set to be tabled in October 2023, according to a board director of PCB, to date, it is not listed on the Parliament website. Sarawak has become the first state in Malaysia to have an ombudsman law, with the passing of the Ombudsman Bill 2023 at the State Legislative Assembly in November 2023.

The recent declaration by Syed Abu Hussin Hafiz Syed Abdul Fasal, a Member of Parliament (MP) for Bukit Gantang, expressing his support for Anwar Ibrahim and his administration in exchange for development funds for his district, emphasises the ongoing worry about the unequal

distribution of Constituency Development Funds (CDF). The CSO Platform strongly urges the Madani government and all state governments to take immediate and decisive action in order to ensure a just and equitable allocation of funds for constituency development. It is imperative to rectify the practice of utilising these allocations to consolidate political power in order to preserve the democratic ideals to which our nation is committed. BERSIH has reiterated its demand for CDF institutionalisation in order to guarantee dissemination. BERSIH contends that CDF allocations to opposition MPs should not be conditional, since all MPs, irrespective of political party affiliation, are entitled to such allocations.

## **Parliament and State Legislative Assembly Reform**

The Madani government expressed its intention to reintroduce the Parliamentary Services Act (PSA) and the Houses of Parliament (Privileges and Powers) Act in Parliament. According to the Senate president Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, "These acts will equip the Parliament as the legislative branch with the legal, procedural and administrative infrastructure to fully realise its functions and duties as one of these branches of separated powers in the enactment of the Federal Constitution." This act is already in the last stages of deliberation. In fact, the CSO Platform was invited to one of the Parliament's lecture series on the PSA, which took place in August 2023.

The Madani government has formed ten parliamentary special select committees (PSSC) to scrutinise the government's policies and operations. The establishment of these committees is part of the Madani government's efforts to improve governance and accountability, as well as to hold the government accountable for its activities. The committees are cross-party groups of MPs tasked by Parliament with a certain job or topic, one of which is a special select committee committed to human rights, elections, and institutional reform. The goal of these committees is to expand Parliament's capacity by allowing it to evaluate a broader range of subjects or occurrences at the same time, as well as to allow MPs to gain a degree of specialty in a subject, thus fostering deeper and more effective scrutiny of the government.

Despite the hopeful step of expanding the number of PSSC to ten (see *table 1* below) from six in the 14th Parliament, it is still insufficient (see *table 2* below). According to the CSO Platform press release, the establishment of ten Special Select Committees of Parliament with just nine members each is a waste because the PSSC continues to fail to adequately use government and opposition MPs in the established committees. BERSIH advocated raising the number of parliamentarians in each committee to a maximum of 16 or establishing more PSSC to ensure that each Member of Parliament chosen by the people fulfils their function and responsibility in the committee to which they have been assigned. The Madani government did not take this proposal into account.

Committee	Established	Chair	Responsibility
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Finance and Economy		Mohd Shahar Abdullah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Finance</li> <li>• Ministry of Economy</li> <li>• Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture</li> <li>• Prime Minister's Department</li> </ul>
Health		Dzulkefly Ahmad	Ministry of Health
Entrepreneurship, Costs of Living and Agriculture		Cha Kee Chin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minister of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperative</li> <li>• Ministry of Domestic Trade and Cost of Living</li> <li>• Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry</li> </ul>
Infrastructure, Transport and Communications		Yusuf Abd. Wahab	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Works</li> <li>• Ministry of Transport</li> <li>• Ministry of Communications and Digital</li> <li>• Ministry of Rural and Regional Development</li> <li>• Ministry of Local Government Development</li> </ul>
Nation Building, Education and Human Resource Development		Saifuddin Abdullah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prime Minister's Department</li> <li>• Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Education</li> <li>• Ministry of Higher Education</li> <li>• Ministry of Human Resources</li> <li>• Ministry of Youth and Sports</li> </ul>
Environment, Science and Plantation		Ahmad Amzad Mohamed @ Hashim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Natural Resources, Environment and Climate Change</li> <li>• Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation</li> <li>• Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security</li> <li>• Ministry of Plantation and Commodities</li> </ul>
Security		Jonathan Yasin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Home Affairs</li> <li>• Ministry of Defence</li> <li>• Prime Minister's Department</li> </ul>
International Trade and Relations		Wong Chen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Foreign Affairs</li> <li>• Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry</li> <li>• Ministry of Economy</li> </ul>

Human Rights, Elections and Institutional Reforms		William Leong Kee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prime Minister's Department</li> <li>• Attorney General Chambers</li> <li>• Election Commission</li> </ul>
Women, Children and Community Development		Yeo Bee Yin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development</li> <li>• Ministry of Youth and Sports</li> <li>• Ministry of Rural and Regional Development</li> <li>• Ministry of National Unity</li> </ul>

Table 1: 15th Parliament Parliamentary Special Select Committees

Committee	Established	Chair	Responsibility
Budget	4 December 2018	Mustapa Mohamed	Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Economic Affairs and related bodies
Defence and Home Affairs	4 December 2018	Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad	Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Home Affairs and related bodies
Elections	17 October 2019	Syed Ibrahim Syed Noh	Election Commission of Malaysia and associated bodies
Gender Equality and Family Development	4 December 2018	Nor Azrina Surip	Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and related bodies

International Relations and Trade	17 October 2019	Wong Chen	Ministry of Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and related bodies
Science, Innovation and Environment	17 October 2019	Fadillah Yusof	Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change and related bodies

Table 2: 14th Parliament Parliamentary Special Select Committees

The CSO Platform also requested that the Finance Ministry and the Speaker's office allocate adequate budgetary resources to increase funding for PSSCs. It would allow these committees to function outside of parliamentary sessions. Currently, PSSCs can only meet during parliamentary sessions, which may limit their ability to successfully serve their intended functions.

The Malaysian parliamentary select committee's budget allocation for 2024 is RM393.8 billion, making it the country's greatest government expenditure plan in history. The operating expenditure in this budget is RM303.8 billion. The budget was Anwar Ibrahim's idea, and Parliament approved it at the policy stage. The parliamentary select committee's budget is part of the country's larger budgetary framework, which includes numerous ministries and government operations.

In February 2023, Speaker Johari Abdul of the Dewan Rakyat announced the introduction of both **Prime Minister's Questions Time (PMQT) and Minister's Questions Time (MQT)**, suggesting that the PMQT session be held every Tuesday and the MQT session every Thursday. This was described as a pilot, and amendments to the house's standing orders would be required to make question time a regular part of parliamentary proceedings. The MQT session was reduced from 30 minutes to 10 minutes, with ministers providing answers without supplementary questions.

Another parliamentary process introduced by the Speaker is to ensure motions brought by Members of Parliament (MPs) can be discussed. The Special Chamber session would also be improved by increasing the number of motions from two to four per session. This is to give the opposition MPs and government backbenchers an opportunity to lead the session.

At the Dewan Negara (Senate), Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, the Senate President of Malaysia, is working on a proposal to introduce a special provision under the Federal Constitution, namely by implementing an amendment to the Federal Constitution expanding the eligibility criteria which currently requires individuals to be aged 30 and above, so that youths can be appointed as members of the Senate by creating a provision under (Article 45 of the Constitution) to appoint youths aged 18 upward. This way, the Senate can get inputs from the youths and students about

their demands. In the same vein, the proposal will also allow expansion of the Senate memberships which includes youth, women, various indigenous groups, professionals, and athletes.

Drawing attention to the government's failure to effect a change consistent with our recommendation on the appointment of speakers at the Houses of Parliament is in our judgement, a squandered opportunity. The appointment of the president of Dewan Negara was made after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim offered Wan Junaidi, the only contender, as a proposed member name to be selected. The appointment was inconsistent with the recommendations by CSO Platform.

In a more positive light, the Speaker of Dewan Rakyat is seriously considering the necessary actions, such as reducing MPs' allowances if they continue to be absent during Parliament sessions. It is necessary to take a firmer stance "to increase the attendance of Members of Parliament because they have duties and responsibilities towards the voters and parliamentary constituencies they represent." To execute this change, the Rules of Parliament must be amended to facilitate the implementation of such actions. CSO Platform applauds and supports this as a means of ensuring MP attendance in the future.

## Key Laws/Policies Reform

On 3 April 2023, at the second session of the 15th Parliament sitting, the Lower House unanimously voted **to end the mandatory death sentence**. The Abolition of Mandatory Death Penalty Bill 2023 removed the mandatory death penalty for 12 offences, including drug trafficking, murder, treason, and terrorism. Additionally, the death penalty was entirely abolished for seven offences, such as attempted murder and kidnapping. Seven bills related to the abolition of the mandatory death sentence in Malaysia have been passed by the Parliament.

The bills include:

- Criminal Justice (Amendment) Bill 2022,
- Penal Code (Amendment) Bill 2022,
- Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment) Bill 2022,
- Kidnapping (Amendment) Bill 2022,
- Firearms (Increased Penalties) (Amendment) Bill 2022,
- Arms (Amendment) Bill 2022, and
- Dangerous Drugs (Amendment) Bill 2022.

The policy shift replaced the mandatory death penalty with alternative sentences for 11 crimes.

The decision to **abolish the mandatory death penalty** is seen as a critical step towards aligning with international human rights norms and supporting the global trend towards universal abolition of the death penalty. However, advocates for the anti-death penalty, say further push is encouraged to work towards the full abolition of the death penalty entirely in Malaysia, as Malaysia still retains the death penalty for 27 offences, including murder and drug trafficking. Additionally, it has been noted that Malaysia is not a party to the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) or its Second Optional Protocol aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, despite imposing an official moratorium on executions since 2018. The policy shift is an important step towards aligning with international human rights norms and growing global

opposition to capital punishment. On that note, RM18 million has been allocated under Budget 2024 to facilitate legislative reforms, including preparations for the implementation of alternative sentences to the mandatory death penalty.

In April 2023, the government has taken the step to **decriminalise suicide** and attempted suicide in three bills, which were tabled for the first reading in the Dewan Rakyat by Azalina Othman. The three bills were the Penal Code (Amendment) (No.2) Bill 2023, Criminal Procedure Code (Amendment)(No.2)2023, and Mental Health (Amendment) Bill 2023. The move to decriminalise suicide attempts was among the federal government's efforts to destigmatise the issue and encourage Malaysians to seek help rather than punishment. The bills were passed unanimously in a voice vote in May 2023, marking a historic milestone in Malaysia's mental health and legal treatment of self-harm.

It was recorded in the 100-day report that the Home Ministry of Malaysia had set up a special committee to look into **citizenship issues** from all angles in a comprehensive manner. The federal government has proposed amendments to the citizenship laws, which include both progressive and regressive changes, to be presented together in one package to the Conference of Rulers. The progressive changes aim to grant Malaysian mothers equal rights to confer automatic citizenship on their overseas-born children, similar to Malaysian fathers. However, there are also proposed regressive changes that have raised concerns among critics.

The image below is the summary of the proposed amendments.

<b>Malaysian government's proposed "regressive" amendments to citizenship laws in Federal Constitution</b> (according to civil society)		
<b>Constitutional Provision</b>	<b>Proposed Amendment</b>	<b>Effect</b>
Section 1(a), Part II of Second Schedule	To delete the words 'permanently resident'	Children born to Malaysian Permanent Residents (PR) will no longer have access to automatic citizenship
Section 1(e), Part II of Second Schedule	To amend citizenship by 'operation of law' to citizenship by 'registration'; repeal Section 2(3)	Removing the safety net for Malaysia-born stateless children of vulnerable groups
Section 19B, Part III of Second Schedule	To amend from citizenship by 'operation of law' to citizenship by 'registration'.	Foundlings and abandoned children will no longer be entitled to automatic citizenship
Article 26(2)	To replace the word 'date of marriage' with 'date of obtaining citizenship'	Placing foreign wives at risk of citizenship deprivation and statelessness
Article 15(A)	Amend and reduce the age limit from '21 years' to '18 years' for the purpose of citizenship registration	Reducing the time frame for stateless children's citizenship applications

Source: Malaysian Citizenship Rights Alliance (MCRA)

malaymail

(Source from Malaysian Citizenship Rights Alliance)

While the civil society groups welcomed the government's commitment to the proposed "progressive amendments allowing Malaysian mothers to confer citizenship to their overseas-born children," the regressive amendments are at odds with the children's best interests and could potentially keep vulnerable children in a cycle of statelessness. The CSO Platform pointed out that the regressive proposal will "exacerbate and adversely affect Indigenous people of

Sabah and Sarawak who are still stateless." The regressive amendments must be urgently reconsidered, and the proposed amendments must be approached with careful consideration and separation. The situation is evolving, and there is a need for further clarity on the final form of the amendments and their potential impact on citizenship laws in Malaysia.

The Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM) has **expressed support for the proposed progressive amendments** to the Federal Constitution concerning citizenship matters, particularly those related to children born abroad to Malaysian mothers. However, SUHAKAM has raised concerns about other proposed amendments that may lead to the removal of citizenship rights, perpetuating the cycle of statelessness for vulnerable children, such as out-of-wedlock children, stateless children adopted by Malaysian parents, foundlings/abandoned children, and other generational stateless children/persons in Malaysia. SUHAKAM has called for comprehensive research on the impacts of the amendments, emphasising the need for a more deliberate approach to address the complex and sensitive scenarios related to citizenship rights.

The Madani government, however, had made very little progress in eradicating corruption and **addressing undemocratic laws** such as the Sedition Act 1948, the Printing Presses Act 1984, and the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA). The government maintains a firm stance that SOSMA remains a relevant legislation for safeguarding national security, and it is dedicated to enhancing the legislation, as stated by the Home Minister in February 2023. He further stated that SOSMA is crucial for maintaining public order and that the police require legal authority to act swiftly in order to prevent threats to national sovereignty and harmony. Despite Pakatan Harapan's past vehement opposition to SOSMA, it is now still being used to suppress freedom of expression. Kedah Menteri Besar, Sanusi was charged with making seditious remarks about the appointment of the Selangor Menteri Besar and the formation of the unity government during a political meeting in July, and Bersatu Information Chief Razali Idris was charged with making seditious remarks about the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC).

Additionally, BERSIH has also called for a review to be carried out on Official Secrets Act 1972 (OSA), Communication and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA), and Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 (UUCA). Government's recent decision to amend the UUCA to give the Student Representative Council and the student body more financial autonomy, including the establishment of a Student Disciplinary Committee to replace the Vice Chancellor as the university's disciplinary authority is a move in the right direction. Regrettably, the inclusion of specific regressive provisions (sections 4 and 4A) that grant the minister the power to select individuals or groups for investigation, including the selection of a qualified and suitable candidate for the position of Vice Chancellor or any other role, renders the amendment unsound.

More worrying, on one hand the government is increasingly relying on these laws to enhance state power and strengthen the status quo. If such laws are tightened, there is a risk of arbitrary abuse. According to Fahmi Fadzil, the minister in charge of communications and digital,

"....his ministry is also looking at studying amendments to the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA) to empower MCMC with more authority to go after those disseminating slander

on social media. He said the Act also needed to be amended to ensure there is no provocation or slander involving the 3Rs – race, religion and royalty.”

However, it is also troubling because the government has stated that it will not pursue "Harmony" laws in order to regulate speech and behaviour that is racist and/or discriminatory, particularly with regard to the 3Rs; rather, it will enforce current laws.

Concerning the effort to **enhance whistleblower protection**, the Minister for Parliament and Law has recognised the gaps and weaknesses of the current statute and placed the question of amending the Whistleblower Protection Act 2010 on Parliament's agenda. Anwar said during the February 2023 Dewan Rakyat sitting that studies were being conducted into the Whistleblower Protection Act to determine relevant amendments required to enhance whistleblower protection. He had said the government would “table it at the next Parliament session at the latest.” To date, no specific information available on stakeholder meetings relating to the WPA amendment, there have been discussions and efforts at the international level to strengthen whistleblower protection frameworks.

A great stride was made on the children's rights front by the passing of amendments to the **Sexual Offences Against Children Act 2017 and the Evidence of Child Witness Act 2007** to better protect children against sexual crimes and strengthen their protection from online sexual exploitation and abuse. The passing of these amendments represents an important step towards stronger laws against online child sexual exploitation and abuse in Malaysia.

Within 100 days after taking office, Anwar Ibrahim emphasised that under his leadership Malaysia will never recognise LGBT rights, secularism, and communism. Several months later, when interviewed by CNN's Christiane Amanpour in New York in September 2023, Anwar was reported saying **Malaysia will never recognise LGBT rights** and there is a consensus among Muslims and non-Muslims alike that they do not accept open public displays of LGBT, although any harassment will not be condoned.

*"Muslims and non-Muslims alike, there is a consensus - they do not accept this, open public displays of this (LGBT) but do we then go and harass them? That is a different subject. I do not approve of any attempt to harass".*

In the same interview, Anwar has also acknowledged that the sodomy laws should be reviewed to prevent abuses and political persecution.

In order to address the **increasing cost of living and elevate the quality of life** for the people of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, has introduced the Madani Economy: Rakyat Empowerment Framework to address the cost of living. The framework aims to elevate the dignity and quality of life for the people by addressing pressing issues such as the impact of the rising cost of living and eradicating hardcore poverty. It also includes measures to create more jobs with meaningful wages, upskilling programs for informal workers, and the introduction of a National Housing Action Plan to provide affordable housing for all.

The administration has been implementing measures to tighten the country's finances and achieve economic growth of around 5.0%. The government is adopting these programmes in an effort to rectify economic imbalances, increase revenue, and assist the public in dealing with growing living costs. As part of the 2024 federal budget, the government intends to raise the service tax from 6% to 8%, with certain services such as food, beverages, and telecommunications exempt. Furthermore, the definition of taxable services will be broadened to cover logistics, brokerage, underwriting, and karaoke services. Furthermore, the high-value products tax on particular high-value items such as jewels and watches would be raised from 5% to 10%. The administration also intends to eliminate subsidies and implement additional taxes, such as a 10% capital gains tax on share transactions and a 5% to 10% tax on luxury items.

In response to a question from Datuk Seri Takiyuddin Hassan (PN-Kota Baru), who had asked if the Local Government Development Ministry had any plans to introduce local council elections in the country, its Minister, Nga Kor Ming, informed that presently it is not his ministry's priority and thus the government has no plans to introduce local council elections.

Ending the PUSPAKOM monopoly at providing vehicle inspection services beginning after their concession ends in April 2024, is an accomplishment worth mentioning. On the note of ending the monopoly, Anwar Ibrahim has acknowledged Touch'n Go (TnG) monopoly and stated that the government will review TnG's control over highway toll collection and payment systems for public transport.

#### Federal Government-Sabah/Sarawak Governments Focus

The Malaysian cabinet has approved the **transfer of full regulatory control of gas supply to the Sabah government**, which is set to regain control of its oil and gas regulation originating from the state. Coming to 1 year as a government, no specific information available on the progress of the transfer of control or the timeline for its implementation, as royal assent is impending.

The Madani government has allocated RM6.6 billion to Sabah and RM5.8 billion to Sarawak, an increase from the previous year's budget. The government has also increased the Special Interim Grants for Sarawak and Sabah to RM300 million, compared to RM16 million for Sarawak and RM125.6 million for Sabah previously. The government has delegated the power to approve development projects below RM50 million to technical agencies in both states to enhance the effectiveness of these projects. Support for the implementation of hybrid solar energy and the expansion of the transmission line network in Sabah to ensure stability and reduce disruptions in the electricity supply in the state.

The Sarawak State Legislative Assembly unanimously passed an Environment (Reduction of Greenhouse Gas Emission) Bill, 2023, as part of the state government's initiative to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050. These initiatives reflect a broader strategy **to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable economic growth** in the region.

The CSO Platform reiterates its concern in view of the Sabah State government's opaqueness to immediately and publicly clarify its position on the 100-year deal, Nature Conservation Agreement (NCA), that was signed behind closed doors in October 2021.

The CSO Platform for Reform demands the Sabah State Government to immediately and publicly clarify its position on the 100-year deal, Nature Conservation Agreement (NCA), that was signed behind closed doors in October 2021. CSO Platform initiated a joint memorandum that was submitted to the Sabah State Legislative Assembly on 5 December 2021 which demanded for engagement, disclosure and transparency on the Sabah forest carbon deal. However after almost two years, the government did not take any further action on these demands. The government's direction in this deal remains uncertain, leaving doubts about whether the public interest will ultimately be served in the NCA.

## **Recommendations**

### **Governance Leadership Reform**

#### **A. Prime Minister**

- Members propose that the role of Prime Minister be limited to two terms, with the sole duty of overseeing ministerial roles and developments of projects nationwide. The Prime Minister should not hold any other portfolio apart from being Prime Minister.
- Absolute powers of the Prime Minister should also be decentralised. Members of the CSO Platform for Reform are of the view that too much power is centralised within the Executive, specifically to the Prime Minister. The powers should instead be distributed among state and local authorities. Similarly, the PM's powers should also be distributed to Sabah and Sarawak, especially in handling the education framework and funds in the respective states.
- Members of the CSO Platform also call for the exposure of data in the PM's Office (PMO) and PM's Department (JPM), for transparency into its levels of power and information. This transparency would enable accountability to be measured and address the confusion of power structure in the PMO and PMD.

#### **B. Premier/Chief Minister/Menteri Besar**

- Similar to that of the Prime Minister, the roles of state Premier/Chief Minister/Menteri Besar should also be limited to two terms. The Premier should be tasked solely with overseeing and monitoring state-related projects, and hold no other portfolio.

#### **C. Minister/Exco**

- Ministerial and Exco positions are also proposed to adhere to a two-term limit. Apart from their task to ensure all projects and government initiatives take place as scheduled, no Minister or Exco member should hold any other portfolio, nor GLC positions.

#### **D. Civil servant chief (Director General)**

- Members maintain that the term for the role should be as required by the law, however there should be more transparency in appointments to ensure positions are secured based on merit and performance.
- The Director General should be committed to ensuring smooth procedure of government duties at the optimum level. They should not hold any position in any political party and the appointment for a Director General should be free from any political influence. They

should be focused primarily on their duty to serve the nation, not furthering any political agenda.

E. Deputy Ministers in all ministries

- Regular monitoring is required into the relevance and functionality of such roles.
- Parliament should have one mechanism such as a Parliamentary Committee to go through senior ministerial positions.

### **Institutions Reform**

Some proposals from the CSO Platform are to establish:

A. Specific research into GLCs in Malaysia, particularly in determining GLC frameworks and concepts. The research should be conducted by reliable GLC professionals or experts.

B. Independent Commission on Land Rights (18th recommendation by SUHAKAM in the 2013 National Inquiry on the Land Rights of Indigenous Peoples), to ensure that indigenous land rights issues are addressed effectively. The functions of the Commission, among others, should be to advise the government on laws and policies related to indigenous peoples; propose and monitor sustainable development programmes on indigenous peoples' land; promote participation of indigenous peoples at all levels; and conduct research on issues related to the well-being of indigenous peoples. The Commission members should be composed mainly of indigenous peoples' representatives that receive the support from, and acceptance by, indigenous peoples of Malaysia.

C. A National Unity Commission with inclusive participation from experts, relevant stakeholders and CSOs.

D. Efforts are now being made to establish the institution of Ombudsman Malaysia. It is imperative to ensure the involvement of experts and civil society organisations (CSOs) in the process of receiving complaints pertaining to government departments or agencies that are either under investigation or have received grievances from the general public.

E. Strengthening protection against strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPP)

### **Parliament and State Legislative Assembly Reform**

A. Effective Select Committees at Parliament and State levels

The Parliamentary Select Committees are sub-legislative bodies each consisting of a small number of Members of Parliament (MPs) from the House of Representatives, or senators from the Senate, or a mix of both appointed to deal with particular areas or issues; most are made up of members of the Representatives appointed to deal with particular areas or issues. CSOs should be institutionalised as part of the Select Committee; CSOs can be Secretariat and regular dialogue partners of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia (APPGM).

B. Parliamentary Committee to vet the appointment of senior ministerial positions

C. Council for Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants (MAPO) to be put under a Parliamentary Select Committee. This would promote transparency in demanding for:

- I. their accountability to report to the Select Committee; and
- II. a reporting mechanism for the government.

D. Process of appointment of Speaker/Deputy Speakers

The appointment process for the position of Speaker of the Dewan Rakyat and its deputies must be transparent and not by political appointment. The proposal is for the Speaker to be elected by MPs, when the House meets for the first time after a general election. Any MP is qualified to be the Speaker of the House, but non-MPs who meet the same qualifications required to be an MP are also eligible for election as Speaker. A candidate for Speaker must be nominated and seconded by at least two MPs other than himself. This nomination process must be conducted at least 14 days before the election of the Speaker. If only one candidate meets these conditions, he is automatically elected Speaker; otherwise, voting by secret ballot is conducted, with the winner decided by a simple majority. Two deputy Speakers are elected in a similar manner. This also includes the appointment of the Secretary of the Dewan. This Parliament and State Legislative Assembly Reform is to monitor the appointment process, and ensure accountability of questions delivered in the Parliament.

E. Reforming Debates to be more constructive

Debates between MPs must be constructive and will be treated with decorum and respect, befitting of the august house.

F. Use of data and statistics in discussing policy

Peoples' issues are to be brought up in the Parliament supported by data and statistics, so that policies can be enacted or rejected based on informed decisions.

G. Stricter attendance for all MPs and ADUNs

MPs and ADUNs should attend all sittings, unless debilitated by illness. The public may monitor their representative's attendance record through the Hansard.

H. Set length of sitting to at least 135–150 days

The legislative sitting schedule should be established and published at the start of the year. The previous government convened Parliament for only 89 days (prior to Pakatan Harapan assuming the government in November 2022). The current government has only been in office for 74 days, which is significantly less than the previous one. Malaysia needs a healthy and robust Parliament to function well. The schedule of Parliament sessions and meetings for the year should be made public, before the Parliament convenes, not unlike the meeting schedule published by the United Nations.

I. Revival of the Research Component at Parliament and State Levels

This is to provide support to all MPs and ADUNs at the respective levels. An opportunity has presented itself at Parliament level where the government is set to reinstate the Parliamentary Services Act 1963, which is aimed at equipping the Parliament with the legal, procedural, and administrative infrastructure to fully realise its functions and duties as one of the branches of separated powers in the enactment of the Federal Constitution. The Act is expected to provide the necessary legal framework for parliamentary administration, including key characteristics,

principles, mandates, composition, staffing, and budgetary issues. This will necessarily give autonomy to the Parliament to, among other things, improve the resources and capacities of its research department.

According to the Parliament website, the functions of the Research and Library Division are as follows:

- I. To analyse the Bills tabled, and to prepare Bills analysis report.
- II. To prepare abstract and speaking notes for Members of Parliament attending local or overseas conferences/meetings and seminars.
- III. To assist Members of Parliament with information and statistics, and prepare notes for debate in the House.
- IV. To manage Parliament's Library.
- V. To manage an index database for Bills tabled and newspaper cutting.
- VI. To manage multimedia collection on interactive web.
- VII. To manage and implement research tasks according to area i.e economy, social, energy science, security and international for Members of Parliament.

**J. Re-emphasise Contempt of Parliament/State Assemblies**

Propose a standard of punishment to ensure the functionality of Dewan Rakyat and prevent MP/ADUN from escaping.

**K. Modality of the Dewan Negara - Reforms should be made to make the Dewan Negara more democratic and inclusive, namely:**

- I. Lowering the eligibility age to become a Senator, from 30 years old to 18 years old.
- II. Empowering the Dewan Negara with the power to reject, and not just delay bills, from Dewan Rakyat.
- III. Increasing the proportion of Sabah and Sarawak Senators in the Dewan Negara to 1/3, to provide East Malaysia with check-and-balance powers on constitutional amendments.
- iv. Exploring systems to elect Senators, instead of the current system of appointments.

**L. Petition Submission**

CSO Platform for Reform to fully utilise the 60 members in the coalition by:

- I. Having a press conference after each petition submission
- II. Working with existing network in the Parliament
- III. Organising systematic engagement

Petition must have the proposal of suggestions and/or solutions.

**Key Laws/Policies Reform**

**A. Abolish/Amend Repressive Laws**

- I. Cease and desist the use of (draconian) oppressive and unjust laws, such as:  
Sedition Act 1948 - The Sedition Act 1948 (Akta Hasutan 1948) in Malaysia is a law prohibiting discourse deemed as seditious. The Act was originally enacted by the colonial authorities of British Malaya in 1948 to contain the local communist insurgency. The Act criminalises speech with "seditious tendency," including that which would "bring into

hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against" the government or engender "feelings of ill-will and hostility between different races." In post-colonial times, the Act has been abused to silence dissenting voices of activists in particular. The CSO Platform views this as unreasonable censorship and restriction on freedom of expression, as enshrined in Article 10 of the Federal Constitution.

Detention without trial: Prevention of Crime Act 1959(POCA), Prevention of Terrorism Act 2015 (POTA), Security Offences (Special Measures) Act 2012 (SOSMA) – These laws are notorious for having been abused in the past, and while they remain on the statute, there are sufficient laws to address the threats of crime and terrorism without the government resorting to SOSMA, POCA, or any other authoritarian laws. If need be, existing laws can be amended or appropriate new laws enacted to ensure that national security is not compromised.

Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 – The Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (Akta Mesin Cetak dan Penerbitan 1984) is a Malaysian statute governing the usage of printing presses and the printing, importation, production, reproduction, publishing and distribution of publications in Malaysia. Although the law was meant to maintain genuine news stories, create a regulated press sector, and provide legal guidelines to reporters, some say that the legislation is restricting political discourse, silencing political opponents and manipulating the news delivered to consumers.

National Security Council Act 2016 – The National Security Council or Majlis Keselamatan Negara Malaysia (MKN) is a federal agency under the Prime Minister's Department. The Council is responsible for managing and coordinating the implementation of policies related to the security of Malaysia. It is chaired by the Prime Minister of Malaysia and consists of the council's executive members, including the Deputy Prime Minister as deputy chairman, NSC Director General, three ministers (Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs and the Minister of Communications and Multimedia), the Chief Secretary to the Government, the Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and the Inspector-General of Police (IGP). On 22 December 2015, the Malaysian Senate passed a controversial national security bill that the government says will strengthen its ability to counter rising threats, which critics have slammed as a blow to democracy and human rights.

Anti-Fake News Act 2018 – On 11 March 2021, the Government of Malaysia issued the Emergency (Essential Powers) (No. 2) Ordinance 2021. The Ordinance criminalises the dissemination of fake news related to COVID-19 and contains accompanying provisions that set aside regular legal guarantees. It is an aggravated reincarnation of the country's Anti-Fake News Act of 2018 that had been repealed in late 2019.

II. Accede to the remaining six core international human rights instruments and their optional protocols:

- CAT - Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- CCPR - International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- CED - Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

- ICERD - International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- ICESCR - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
- ICMW - International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

III. Amend and strengthen the Peaceful Assembly Act 2012 – The Act was amended in 2019 to remove street protest as a criminal offence. This Act must be further amended and strengthened to allow for the rights to peaceful assembly to be fully exercised, as enshrined in the Constitution.

IV. Electoral reform – Efforts to further increase transparency, efficacy, and inclusivity of election processes must continue especially given the success of UNDI18.

*B. Proposal of new laws*

Political Funding Law - The Malaysian government has been discussing the enactment of a political funding law for several years, but its legislation has yet to be passed. The lack of a legislative framework for political financing in Malaysia has created an ecosystem that is ripe for corruption, cronyism, conflict of interest, and abuse of power. The Malaysian Bar has called for the enactment of political financing laws without any delay to address these issues. The government has been urged to expedite the enactment of a political funding law to prevent influential figures or big corporations from exploiting donations to political parties. Experts have suggested that a "realistic" law on political financing would be better than nothing and that reforms could also take place at the state level. While there is no specific information available on the progress of the political funding law in Malaysia, the government's commitment to economic reforms and tightening its finances, as reflected in the 2024 federal budget, may have an impact on the enactment of the law.

*C. State law reform*

- I. Land Law – To amend and strengthen Land Laws especially pertaining to customary land rights and Orang Asli lands.
- II. Syariah Law – To amend and strengthen Islamic religious law that deals with exclusively Islamic laws, which has jurisdiction upon every Muslim in Malaysia.
- III. Local Government Act – The enactment of the Local Government Act 1976 led to the abolition of local authority elections. The Act provided that the Mayor or President and all Councillors of a local authority, i.e., City Council, Municipal Council or District Council shall be appointed by the State Authority. The Commissioner of the City of Kuala Lumpur would be appointed by the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- IV. Local Council Elections – There is currently a political will in Kuala Lumpur, hence, it should be the first one to have the local council election.
- V. Local government financing – Distribution of resources and revenue with the states should be more transparent and available for public access. Local authorities should engage with economic experts to execute proposals for the local government.

*D. Sabah and Sarawak focus areas*

- I. Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63) - The MA63 is the agreement which combined North Borneo, Sarawak, (and Singapore) with the existing states of the Federation of Malaya, resulting in a union named Malaysia, which covers the rights of Sabah and Sarawak. There is a need to empower the regions of Sabah and Sarawak through the implementation of the MA63, the decentralisation of power to both regions, and to reduce the development gap between Sabah, Sarawak and the peninsula, and to ensure the rights of the Orang Asli, Sabah, Sarawak and the peninsula.
- II. Leadership of Sabah and Sarawak for full autonomy in handling their state - education. A long-term and ad hoc Committee to address local issues, such as statelessness in Sabah and labour restriction in plantation companies, to be headed by a committee that is not influenced by the change of government, political appointment, and participated by CSO and grassroot community.
- III. Financial transparency for Sabah and Sarawak is needed as it will ease unbalanced development and tracking back any loophole of fund allocation.
- IV. Cabotage Policy - CSO Platform should relook into the relevance of Cabotage Policy that hampers the price of goods in Sabah and Sarawak.

## Conclusion

This report provides an overview analysis of the areas that require urgent reforms as well as the accomplishments of the Madani administration during its inaugural year in office. There are concerns that the government's focus on staying in power has overshadowed its commitment to reforms. Critics argue that despite pretensions about reforms, there is little evidence of genuine progress during Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's 11-month tenure. The Madani government's approach to reforms has been questioned, with some suggesting that talks about reforms are only aimed at prolonging the stay of the government.

The Madani government is set to celebrate its first year in power with a three-day event from December 8th to 10th at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium. The event, "One Year with the Madani Government," aims to promote the government's new policies, raise awareness about its direction, and showcase its achievements. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim is expected to be present at the closing ceremony on December 10, along with other ministers, and the public is invited to participate in the event. It remains to be seen how the Madani administration perceives itself and the scope of its accomplishments over the course of a year in power.

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## About the Co-Secretariats

**Pusat KOMAS** is a human rights organisation in Malaysia, established in 1993. It actively promotes equality and the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination in Malaysia - #akubangsamalaysia. Since its inception, KOMAS has conducted human rights workshops, forums and conferences to promote social cohesion and national unity in Malaysia.

KOMAS leads the national campaign to ratify the International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in Malaysia. As part of its advocacy to ratify ICERD, KOMAS has been engaging the federal, state and local governments, and conducted dialogues with the grassroots to increase the knowledge and awareness on the issue of racial discrimination in Malaysia and the importance of the ratification of ICERD.

KOMAS has been in close collaboration with Jaringan Kampung Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia (JKOASM) since 1993. JKOASM is a network of indigenous villages in Peninsular Malaysia, that advocates the issues of the Orang Asli and empowers the communities on their ancestral rights and basic human rights.

KOMAS is always seen at the forefront along other civil society movements in the promotion and enhancement of democracy, equality and human rights in Malaysia; and has been working in collaboration with several NGO coalitions in Malaysia such as BERSIH 2.0, the Coalition of Malaysian NGOs (COMANGO) for the UPR process, Malaysian Civil Society Organisations on Sustainable Development Goals (CSO-SDG Alliance), the Ratify ICERD Working Group, and Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia (GBM).

At the regional level, KOMAS is an accredited member of Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA) and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR). In addition to being a voting member of the World Alliance for Citizen Participation (CIVICUS), KOMAS is also an active participant of the ASEAN Civil Society Conference/ASEAN Peoples' Forum (ACSC/APF) and played the secretariat and co-secretariat roles in Malaysia and Timor Leste in 2015 and 2016 respectively.

**SUARAM** - Suara Rakyat Malaysia (SUARAM) is a non-governmental organisation established in 1989 to monitor and advocate for the respect of human rights in Malaysia. Through its consistent and uncompromising work, it has established itself as one of the key human rights organisations, one to which Malaysians turn to for information and support.

The organisation defends all aspects of human rights, especially the right to trial, freedom from abuse of police powers and law enforcement agencies; freedom of expression and information; freedom of assembly and association; freedom of religion; the rights of minorities, refugees, asylum seekers, migrants and trafficked persons and democracy.