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# THE NEW MALAYSIA

Volume 37

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## CHALLENGES OF GOVERNMENT DEBT FOR FISCAL POLICIES IN MALAYSIA

Hillary (Zhenyang) Ni..... 1

Having inherited a concerning amount of government debt and obligations from its predecessor, Malaysia's newly elected political party faces a tough balancing act between being fiscally responsible and meeting its ambitious goals for socioeconomic reforms. This article explores the friction between these two objectives by analyzing the fiscal policies proposed and implemented by the new administration as well as future improvements needed for long-term prosperity in public finance.

## INCOME INEQUALITY IN MALAYSIA: THE DICHOTOMY OF GOVERNMENT PERCEPTION AND MALAYSIANS' LIVED EXPERIENCES

Emily E. Buell..... 10

According to the Malaysian government, income equality in Malaysia has been consistently improving for the past 15 years. However, several indicators suggest that the perception among the general Malaysian population is that income equality is not improving or even may be worsening. This article investigates the reasons why this disconnect between government and public perception exists as well as provides policy suggestions for ensuring equitable human development among Malaysians as the country makes strides toward high-income status.

## MARCH TO DEMOCRACY: MALAYSIA'S FOURTEENTH GENERAL ELECTION

Caroline F. Weisstuch..... 20

Malaysia's fourteenth general election marked the first transfer of parliamentary power in the country's 60-year history, with the Pakatan Harapan coalition winning a majority of the Parliament seats and the popular vote. This article examines the factors that led to the election outcome, notably the changes in the rural vote and the previous government's inability to live up to the rising economic expectations of urban, middle-class residents. This victory shifted Malaysia's politics from an electoral authoritarian regime to a legitimate democracy.

## THE HEALTH CARE GAP IN RURAL MALAYSIA

Dominick J. Falcon..... 28

Malaysia has made significant progress over the past several decades in improving health care services. However, providing rural populations with quality and accessible health care remains a challenge, leaving Malaysia to investigate new solutions in health care delivery to rural populations. This article examines the current state of rural health care in Malaysia and suggests possible solutions to bridge the health disparities between urban and rural populations.

## MALAYSIA'S NATURAL ENVIRONMENT: PROGRESS OR PROBLEM?

Malcolm B. Scobell..... 37

Malaysia's greatest environmental problem is the lack of proper enforcement of existing environmental laws and regulations. This failure to enforce stems from an array of issues, including lack of trained personnel, lack of public support for addressing environmental issues, and a profit-first economic mentality that promotes business success over environmental regulation. This article compares two case studies on the palm oil and bauxite mining industries to evaluate the regulatory processes in place while providing an outlook on the future of Malaysia's natural environment.

## ENCRYPTED EXCHANGES: WHATSAPP AND THE MALAYSIAN GENERAL ELECTION

Musa S. Jamshed..... 47

Throughout Malaysia's history, the ruling political coalition of Barisan Nasional has had a hold on the traditional channels by which news has been delivered to the Malaysian people. However, technological development has given space for new forms of media, including WhatsApp. This article

recounts the transformation from print news to WhatsApp public groups and analyzes the role media played in Malaysia's fourteenth general election.

**INDIGENOUS LAND RIGHTS AND THE MARGINALIZATION OF THE ORANG ASLI IN MALAYSIA**  
Danielle T. Sato..... 56

Although the Orang Asli are the original, indigenous peoples of Peninsular Malaysia, they have been largely excluded from the country's economic growth of recent decades. Rather than protect this marginalized community, state officials and private agencies regularly exploit the Orang Asli and their ancestral lands. Given that many of the Orang Asli's prevailing challenges stem from their lack of customary land ownership, systemic change must come from the legislative level.

**MALAYSIA'S ENERGY LANDSCAPE: SUSTAINABILITY AND PRESCRIPTIONS**  
Huilai Gu ..... 65

Historically an energy exporter, Malaysia now faces serious challenges to satisfy rising energy demands, fuel economic growth, and mitigate emissions at the same time. This article evaluates the sustainability of the current energy structure in Malaysia, identifies three key issues threatening the country's energy security, and proposes both short-term and long-term policies to better position renewable energy resources in Malaysia's transition to a sustainable future.

**A NEW COLONIALISM? CHINESE FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT IN MALAYSIAN INFRASTRUCTURE**  
Phillip Hernandez ..... 74

Throughout the last decade, Malaysia has witnessed, first hand, the significant inroads that the People's Republic of China has made in extending its influence throughout the Eastern Hemisphere. Malaysia has been deemed a pivotal location for the receipt of Chinese investment funds, especially in massive infrastructure mega projects. This article discusses China's investment influence on Malaysia and the associated ramifications while identifying three main overarching themes of Chinese investment that revolve around the topic of debt sustainability.

**HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN MALAYSIA: AN OPPORTUNITY TO RESOLVE PAST FAILURES**  
Grace H. Lin ..... 82

Every day, Malaysians face the risk of falling victim to the deceptively enticing world of human trafficking. The fourteenth general election in 2018 resulted in a new coalition, Pakatan Harapan, and brought hope for improved policies, including those concerning human trafficking. This article focuses on the challenges Malaysia faces combating this long-existing issue and provides action steps that, if instated, will greatly improve the well-being of the nation and its people.

**INTEGRATION OF MALAYSIA'S TWO-PRONGED HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**  
Juliet Panichella..... 90

Malaysia's health care system is two-pronged, consisting of both public and private sectors. The quality of the two health care sectors is not of equal standard, however, which has led to polarization of the overall health care system. The main differences in quality are the cost of health care services, cost of prescription drugs, doctor-patient ratio, and perceived quality of care. Both prongs have strengths and weaknesses that, if unified, could form the basis for collaboration and a better health care system for all.

**SONS OF THE SOIL: THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF MALAYSIA'S BUMIPUTERA**  
Calvin W. Floyd..... 97

The majority of Malaysia's population is classified as bumiputera based on their ethnic and religious background. These bumiputera receive special privileges, as they have historically been on the low end of an economic disparity. This article examines the policies supporting said privileges, their suitability in the present, and the future of the bumiputera.

**CONTRIBUTORS..... 105**