

# MALAYSIA RACISM REPORT 2025

*The cover design draws from a patchwork of textile, weaving, and craft motifs associated with the many cultures and communities in Malaysia. Bringing these patterns together into a single composition intends to reflect the country's diversity as interconnected, layered, shared. We are all part of a common social fabric, where diverse histories, identities, and traditions coexist.*

*Cut from the same cloth....*

**MALAYSIA  
RACISM  
REPORT  
2025**

*Compiled and prepared by:  
Pusat KOMAS  
Malaysia*

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# Foreword

This report is published at a critical juncture for Malaysia. As we continue to navigate the complexities of nation-building in a diverse and evolving society, we are confronted with an urgent question: are we doing enough to defend the notion of equal and common citizenship for all Malaysians in this beautiful land and seas of our nation.

The issues examined in this report are not new. They are deeply embedded in longstanding structural challenges, within our policies, our institutions, and, at times, our collective attitudes. Yet their persistence is precisely what makes this moment so important. For too long, gaps in protection, accountability, and access to justice have been acknowledged but insufficiently addressed. This report is an attempt to bring these realities into sharper focus and grounded in evidence.

In Malaysia, the last decade has seen an awakening and a pride in our commitments to democratic principles and fundamental liberties, as enshrined in the Federal Constitution. The many layers and levels of discrimination is more pronounced now as there is quick media uptake for all to know. This includes, among others, migrant workers, refugees, stateless persons, indigenous communities, and individuals who face discrimination due to their identity or socio-economic status.

Over the years, Malaysia has made important strides in institutional reforms, public discourse on governance, and an increased civic participation. These signals a society that is engaged and evolving. This report does not seek to assign blame, but neither does it shy away from calling attention to systemic shortcomings. It is through honest reflection that meaningful reform becomes possible. The findings presented here highlight not only the challenges we face, but also practical pathways for improvement. They point to the need for coordinated action across government agencies, meaningful engagement with civil society, and a willingness to centre policy decisions on evidence and human dignity.

This is therefore a call to all stakeholders, especially policymakers, enforcement agencies, civil society organisations, and members of the public, to engage with this report seriously and constructively. It is a call to move beyond denial or defensiveness, and instead embrace a shared responsibility to improve systems that affect us all. Reform is not a sign of weakness; it is a demonstration of maturity and commitment to justice.

I wish to extend my deepest appreciation to the small Pusat KOMAS team that made this report possible. They undertook this work with rigour and integrity. A big thank you to all journalists and individuals who reported on these incidents in 2025. Your voices are at the heart of this publication.

Ultimately, the value of this report will not be measured by its publication, but by its impact. It must serve as a living document, one that informs policy, shapes discourse, and drives tangible improvements in people's lives. Let this not be the end of a process, but the beginning of renewed commitment. As we mark the launch of this report on 30 March 2026, we must recognise that documentation alone will not lead to change. Too often, reports are produced, acknowledged, and then set aside. We cannot afford that outcome. Ultimately, the value of this report will not be measured by its publication, but by its impact. The credibility of our institutions, and indeed our collective integrity as a society, depends on whether we are prepared to act on what we know.

*Jerald Joseph*  
*Director*

# Preamble

Malaysia is a plural and diverse society, founded upon the coexistence of multiple races, ethnicities, religions, and cultures. This diversity reflects the inherent dignity and equal worth of all persons, as recognised under universal human rights principles. At the same time, persistent forms of racism and racial discrimination continue to undermine the full enjoyment of human rights by individuals and communities across the country.

International human rights standards affirm that all persons are entitled to equality before the law and to freedom from discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, descent, or national origin. Racism—whether expressed through individual prejudice, social exclusion, or systemic and institutional practices—constitutes a violation of these fundamental principles and has tangible consequences on access to education, employment, healthcare, housing, justice, and participation in public life.

In the Malaysian context, it is pivotal to understand racism within its historical and structural dimensions. Policies and practices that distinguishes any individuals, on the basis of race, even when framed as protective or corrective measures, require ongoing scrutiny to ensure they are consistent with principles of proportionality, necessity, and non-discrimination, and do not result in the marginalisation or silencing of affected communities. It ought therefore to be preliminarily established that racism is not confined to minority communities alone but may also affect members of the majority population in Malaysia.

The Malaysia Racism Report 2025 is grounded in a human right-based approach that centres human dignity, equality and justice. It seeks to document lived experiences of racism, analyse laws and policies through the lens of international human rights norms, and assess their impact on vulnerable and marginalised groups.

It should be duly noted that the objective of this report is not to inflame division, but to promote constructive engagement and reform. By identifying gaps between human rights commitments and lived realities, this Malaysian Racism Report 2025 aims to contribute towards the realisation of a Malaysia in which all persons are able to live free from racial discrimination and enjoy their rights on an equal and meaningful basis.

To those who have read thus far, we invite you to engage with the Malaysian Racism Report 2025 with an open mind and a holistic understanding of the realities unfolding in the Malaysia we collectively cherish. Should any part of this report evoke perceptions of racism as an “us versus them” divide, the Pusat KOMAS team encourages readers to instead reframe the discourse as “*us versus racism*.” This report is intended not to entrench division, but to foster reflection, solidarity, and a shared commitment to dignity, equality, and justice for all.

# Introduction

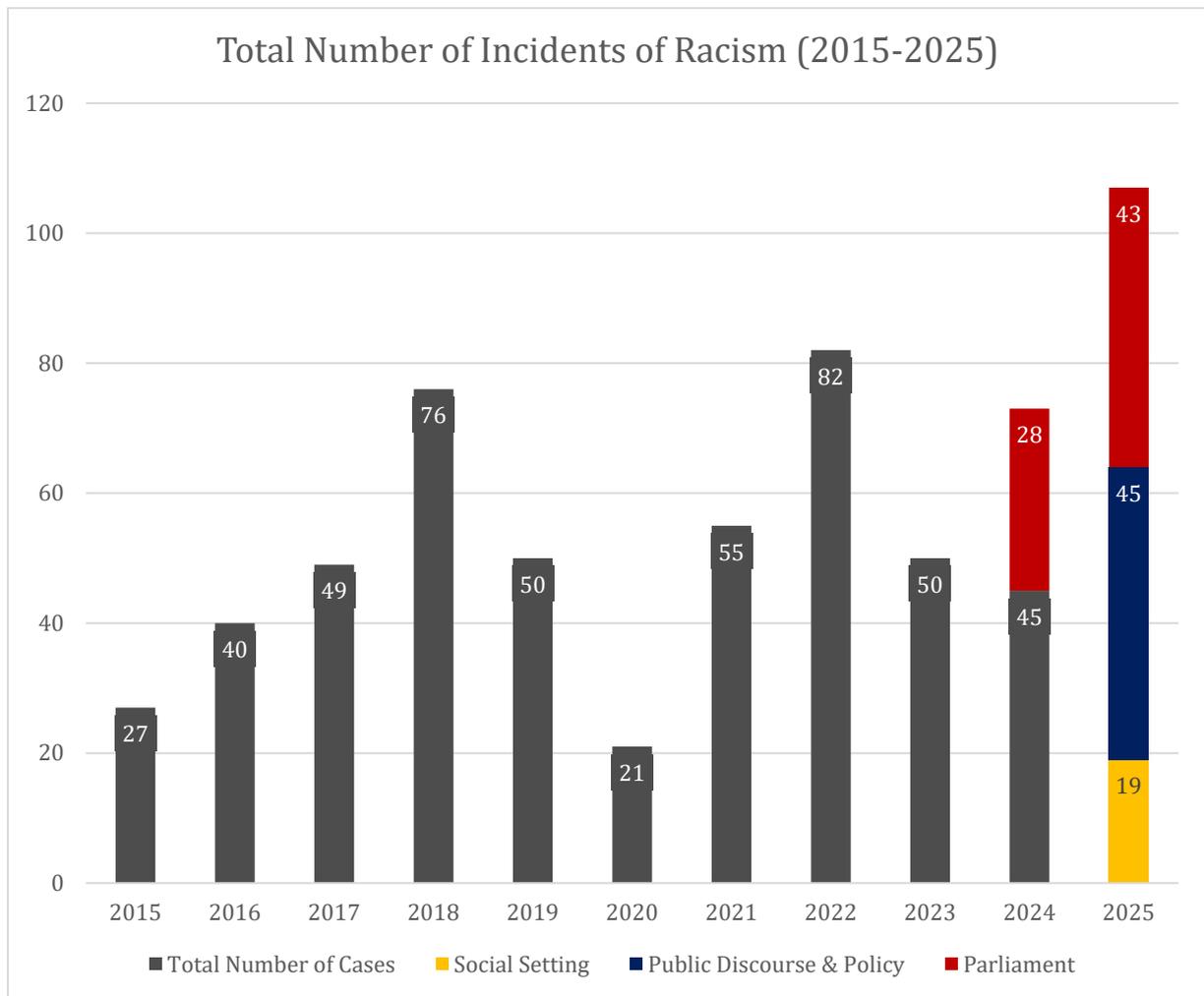
The *Malaysia Racism Report 2025* documents and analyses reported incidents of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related forms of exclusion in Malaysia over the course of the year. Produced by Pusat KOMAS, the report seeks not only to record such incidents, but also to identify broader patterns in how racism manifests across social, institutional, and political spaces. In doing so, it aims to contribute to public understanding and encourage accountability in all sectors. KOMAS' Racism Reports go beyond just documenting these unsavoury incidences by also supporting efforts towards greater equality and non-discrimination in Malaysia.

The 2025 edition builds on previous iterations of the Report by introducing a clearer overall structure for presenting its findings. Specifically, the *Malaysia Racism Report 2025* organises the determined categories of the recorded incidents into three broad macro-categories: **Social Setting, Public Discourse and Policy, and Parliament**. This was done to better reflect the primary context in which racism is expressed, while retaining the more specific categories as per KOMAS' usual reporting and analysis. Said categories are organised as follows:

1. **Social Setting** - sectors and settings that involve/affect persons at the community level, i.e., Business/Workplace, Education, Housing/Rental, and Others
2. **Public Discourse and Policy** - incidents, statements, utterances, and narratives in the public domain categorised by topic, i.e., Policies, Religious Discrimination, Xenophobia, Politics, Incitement towards Hatred, and Prejudice and Provocation
3. **Parliament** – incidents, utterances and acts within the *Dewan Rakyat* (House of Representatives), categorised by their overarching forms of racism

This structure also intends to paint a picture on how racism and discrimination do not emerge through narrow channels, but may take shape through everyday institutional settings, public narratives, and policy debates, as well as within formal political spaces. The use of these broader categories allows for a more categorical reading of the data by distinguishing between incidents based on their primary context and mode of expression.

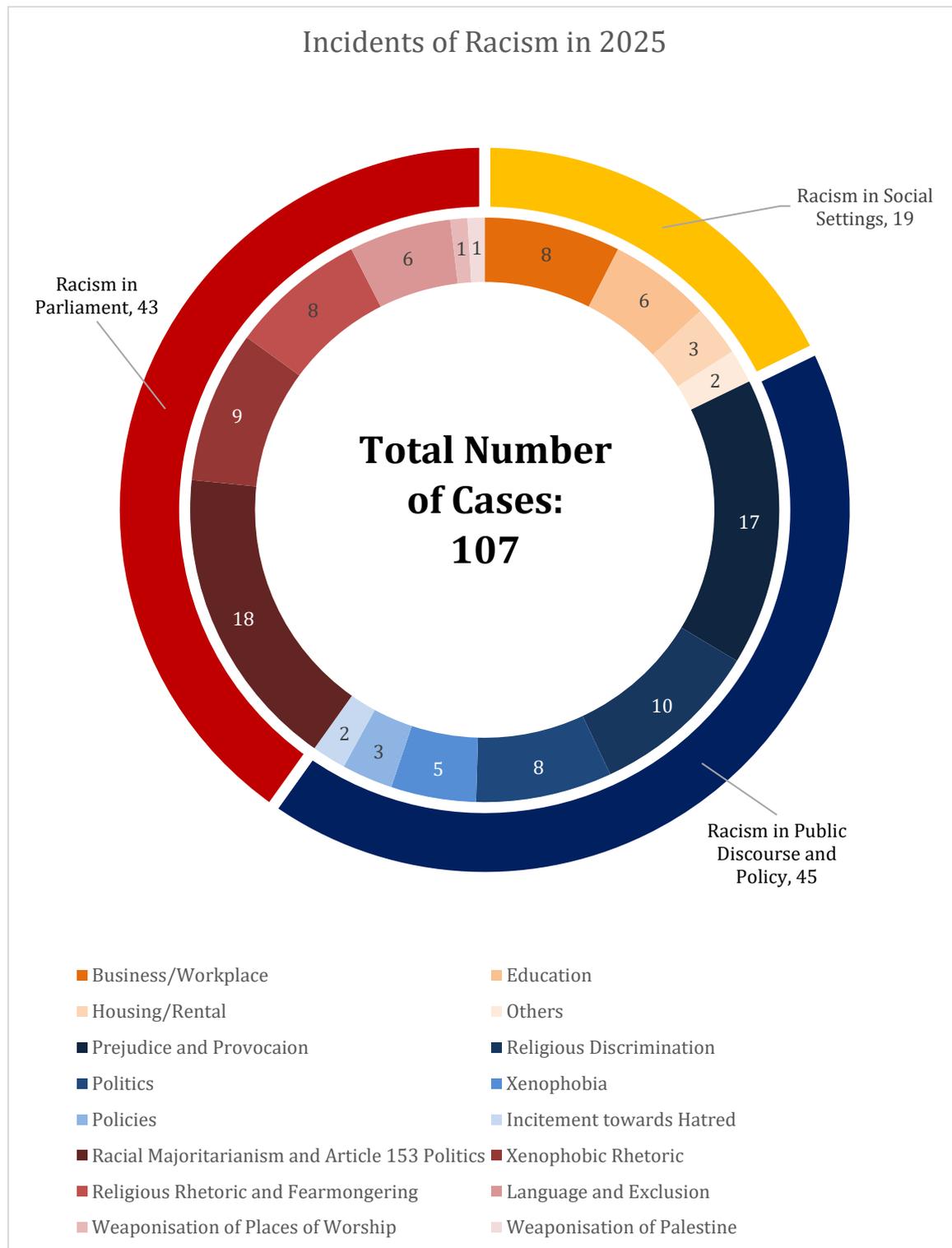
## Overview of Findings



To situate this year's findings better, the chart above compares the total number of incidents recorded across the eleven editions of the *Malaysia Racism Report*. This offers a broad view of how the number of reported incidents documented by Pusat KOMAS has shifted over time. However, these figures should be read with some care, as the report's methodology and categorisation standards have been refined across different editions in response to changing patterns of racism and discrimination.

In 2025, we have recorded **107 cases**, the highest number of cases recorded of the eleven years since the start of this initiative.

## Cases by Category



The above pie chart illustrates the distribution of reported incidents involving racial and religious issues across said categories in 2025 based on Pusat KOMAS' exploratory methodology. The figures show that such incidents arise in a wide range of social, political, and institutional contexts, though some categories appear far more prominent than others.

The largest proportion of incidents came from our *Dewan Rakyat (Parliament)* for the second year running which accounted for **43 cases, or 40.2%**. This is partially because Parliament is a formally documented proceeding, where incidents can be identified through analysing official Hansards. Compared to incident sources from public reporting, parliamentary incidents are therefore less prone to omission, undercounting, or uncertainty. Hence, this number could reflect the relative verifiability of parliamentary records, rather than a direct comparable rise in incidents across other settings.

Within the parliamentary category itself, the largest subcategory was **Racial Majoritarianism and Article 153 Politics**, which accounted for **18 cases, or 16.8%** of the total. This was followed by **Xenophobic Rhetoric** with **9 cases (8.4%)**, **Religious Rhetoric and Fearmongering** with **8 cases (7.5%)**, and **Language and Exclusion** with **6 cases (5.6%)**. The remaining parliamentary categories, **Weaponisation of Palestine** and **Weaponisation of Places of Worship**, accounted for **1 case (0.9%) each**. Taken together, these figures suggest that parliamentary incidents in 2025 were driven primarily by racial majoritarian framing, alongside recurring xenophobic and religious rhetoric.

Beyond Parliament as a distinct and highly documented source, the largest proportion of incidents falls under **Prejudice and Provocation**, which accounts for **17 cases or 15.9%** of the total. Its share is notably larger than any other category outside of Parliament, indicating that interpersonal bias, stereotyping, and discriminatory behaviour remain the most common forms in which racial and religious tensions manifest. When compared with the second-largest category, the difference is substantial: prejudice-related incidents exceed the **Religious Discrimination** category (**10 cases or 9.3%**) by more than 6.6 percentage points.

The Religious Discrimination category forms the third-largest segment of the chart. This suggests that a significant number of incidents are tied specifically to religious sensitivities, beliefs, or practices. While considerably lower than prejudice-related incidents, it still represents a sizable portion of the total and highlights the continued relevance of religious identity in shaping social tensions.

Following this, **Business and Workplace-related** incidents account for **8 cases (7.5%)**. This indicates that a noticeable number of racial or religious disputes arise within professional or commercial environments. The figure is slightly lower than religious-related incidents but remains within a similar range, suggesting that workplace interactions are another important setting where such tensions may surface. The next category, **Politics**, also recorded **8 cases (7.5%)**. Political discourse and activities may sometimes involve racial or religious narratives, and the data suggests that political contexts contribute a meaningful share of the reported cases.

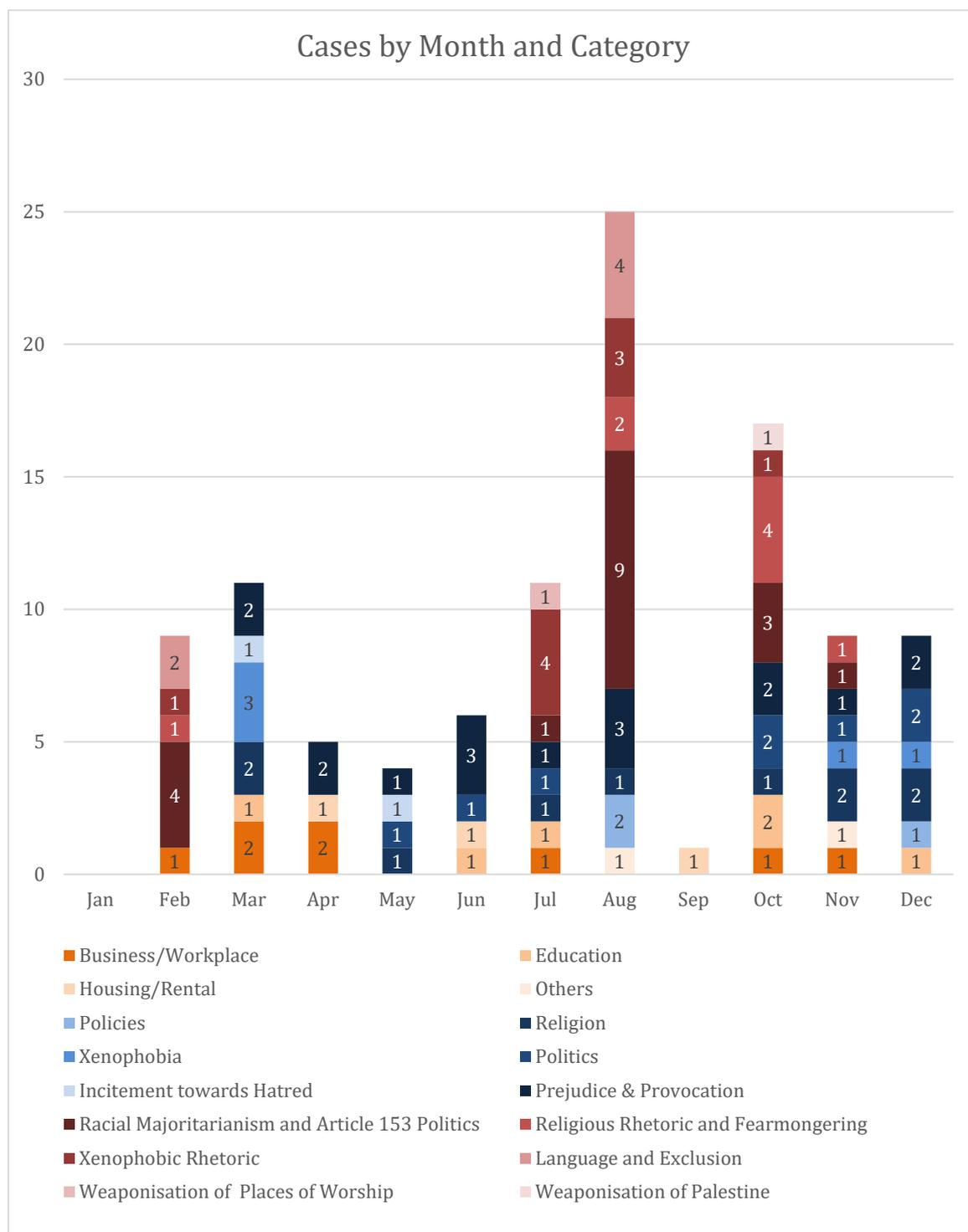
In the mid-range of the chart, **Education-related** incidents represent **5.7%** with **6 cases** of the total. This category includes occurrences within schools, universities, or other learning environments. Although lower than political or workplace settings, the figure indicates that educational spaces are not immune to racial or religious tensions.

**Xenophobic** incidents account for **5 cases (4.7%)**, making them a smaller but still notable category. These incidents often involve hostility or discrimination directed at foreigners or perceived outsiders. The figure is noticeably lower than education-related cases but still represents a meaningful portion of the overall distribution.

Two categories—**Policies** and **Rental/Housing**—each contribute **3 cases (2.8%)** of the incidents. Their equal percentages suggest a similar frequency of reported cases. Policy-related incidents may involve institutional decisions or regulations perceived as discriminatory, while housing-related cases often involve disputes or discrimination in rental or accommodation contexts. The smallest proportions are found in the **Incitement** and **Others** categories, both registering **1.9%**. While these categories form a smaller share of the overall distribution, they remain important in illustrating the range of settings and forms through which racial and religious issues manifested during the year.

Taken together, the chart suggests that the incidents recorded in 2025 were shaped by everyday discrimination in social settings, alongside the prominence of racialised and religion-based rhetoric in both public discourse and Parliament. While Parliament remains a significant source of recorded incidents due in part to the nature of official documentation, the continued prominence of categories such as **Prejudice and Provocation**, **Religion**, and **Politics** indicates that racial and religious tensions continue to be reproduced across multiple spheres of Malaysian public life.

## Distribution of Cases by Month and Category



In 2025, the **majority of recorded cases were concentrated in Public Discourse and Policy**, which accounted for 45 cases, followed by Parliament with 43 cases, and Social Setting with 19 cases. This indicates that racism-related incidents recorded during the year were driven more heavily by public rhetoric, policy-related issues, and parliamentary interventions than by incidents arising in everyday social or institutional settings.

When analysed by month, the number of recorded cases fluctuated significantly across the year. **August** recorded the highest monthly total, with **25 cases**, followed by **October** with **17 cases**. **March** and **July** each recorded **11 cases**, while **September** had the lowest number of recorded incidents, with only **1 case**. These fluctuations suggest that incidents were not evenly distributed throughout the year, but instead clustered around particular moments, especially those linked to developments in Parliament and public discourse.

#### a. **Public Discourse and Policy**

Among the three macro categories, **Public Discourse and Policy** was the most consistent across the year. Cases under this category appeared in multiple months and showed notable peaks in **March, May, and December**. This indicates that discriminatory rhetoric, racialised framing, and policy-related controversies were not confined to isolated incidents, but formed a recurring feature of the broader public environment in 2025. The persistence of this category across the year highlights how racism and discrimination continue to be sustained not only through direct acts, but also through repeated narratives, statements, and policy positions circulating in public life.

#### b. **Parliament**

**Parliament** recorded cases only within the periods when the Dewan Rakyat was in session, namely **Meeting 1 (3 February–6 March)**, **Meeting 2 (21 July–28 August)**, and **Meeting 3 (6 October–4 December)**. As such, the concentration of parliamentary incidents in **February, July, August, October, and November** should be understood in relation to the sitting calendar rather than as a pattern evenly comparable to the other macro-categories. The sharpest concentration was recorded in **August**, which accounted for **18 parliamentary cases**, reflecting both the intensity of incidents during that sitting period and the fact that parliamentary proceedings are systematically documented through official Hansard records. This makes incidents arising in Parliament more readily identifiable and verifiable than many cases occurring in other public settings.

#### c. **Social Setting**

Meanwhile, **Social Setting** recorded the lowest overall number of cases and showed a more modest distribution across the year. Rather than sharp peaks, incidents in this category appeared in smaller clusters, particularly in **March, April, and October**. This suggests that while discrimination in workplaces, educational institutions, housing, and other everyday settings remained a persistent issue, such cases were less numerous within the monitored sample than those arising in public discourse and parliamentary contexts.

This does not necessarily indicate that discrimination in social settings is less significant, but rather that incidents in these spaces may be less visible, less consistently reported, or less likely to generate sustained public attention compared to statements and events occurring in the public and political sphere. In addition, the incidents recorded under this macro-category do not account for social media as a breeding ground for racism, despite the fact that most community-level racial and religious discourse predominantly takes place in virtual spaces.

## **Key Takeaways**

Taken together, the distribution of cases by category and month suggests that the incidents recorded in 2025 were shaped mainly by wider environments of racialised discourse, policy contestation, and institutional political expression. This, however, does not discount the everyday interpersonal discrimination, which very much exists within Malaysian society.

**Public Discourse and Policy** emerged as the most consistent channel through which racist and discriminatory narratives circulated throughout the year, while **Parliament** functioned as a distinct and highly documented institutional arena during its sitting periods. **Social Setting**, though smaller in number, remains important in illustrating how discrimination continues to affect people in the ordinary spaces of daily life.

# Methodology

The *Malaysia Racism Report 2025* adopts a **normative human rights-based framework** to interpret empirically observed incidents. This approach is grounded in the principles of equality and non-discrimination as reflected in international human rights instruments, alongside relevant domestic legal standards, particularly the Federal Constitution of Malaysia. The framework is used not as a neutral descriptive tool, but as a set of normative benchmarks against which incidents are assessed.

## Research Design

This report employs a **qualitative incident-based research design**, combining systematic documentation of publicly reported events with interpretive analysis. The objective is not to measure the prevalence of racism in Malaysia, but to identify, document, and analyse patterns of incidents that raise concerns of racial discrimination or exclusion within a rights-based framework.

## Sources of Information

The report draws from multiple sources: news reports and media coverage, public statements, official releases, policy documents, social media content in the public domain, Parliament Hansards and parliamentary proceedings, and reports submitted directly to Pusat KOMAS, including through its complaint channels. The report's tabulations are based primarily on incidents that entered the public domain, while direct reports to KOMAS serve as additional sources of documentation.

## Selection and Categorisation of Incidents

Incidents included in this report are those for which there is a reasonable basis to conclude they fall within the report's conceptual framework, based on all available information and context. This includes acts of hostility, exclusion, differential treatment, stereotyping, demeaning representation, inflammatory rhetoric, or policies and institutional measures that raise concerns under equality and non-discrimination standards. All reports are verified and carefully scrutinised according to the guiding methodologies used by Pusat KOMAS.

Each incident is categorised under the report's main themes: racism in business/workplace, racism in education, racism in rental/housing, racism through government policies, religious discrimination, and racism in Parliament. Incidents are placed in the category that best reflects their primary context, while overlaps with other themes are addressed in the analysis. This edition further groups incidents into three **macro-categories**: Social Setting, Public Discourse and Policy, and Parliament, while retaining the report's more specific thematic categories within each grouping.

The report also highlights selected positive efforts that promote equality, counter racism or religious discrimination, or foster inter-communal understanding. These include policy measures, institutional reforms, remedial actions, enforcement steps, solidarity initiatives, educational programmes, or other substantive responses that uphold equality and non-discrimination in practice.

### Data Collection

Data is collected through three primary sources:

1. **Media Monitoring** – Systematic review of mainstream and alternative news outlets;
2. **Official Sources** – Government statements, parliamentary records, and public institutional communications;
3. **Submissions to Pusat KOMAS** – Reports submitted by individuals or organisations, subject to verification procedures.

The dataset reflects **reported and publicly visible incidents**, and does not constitute a comprehensive or representative account of all instances of racism in Malaysia.

### Data Analysis

Data collected are analysed classified by themes of incident in order to find patterns on incidences of racism in Malaysia. Incidents were assessed in light of the report's conceptual framework on racism and its related forms of discrimination. These incidents were then arranged by number of captured reported incidences by month and by the subject matter of the discrimination which are:

1. Parliament (racist incidences committed in the *Dewan Rakyat*)
2. Prejudice and Provocation
3. Religious Discrimination
4. Workplace/Business
5. Politics
6. Education
7. Xenophobia
8. Policies
9. Rental/Housing

This edition introduces three broader macro-categories – Social Setting, Public Discourse and Policy, and Parliament – to provide readers with a clearer sense of the broader spaces in which racism and discrimination are expressed, while retaining the report's more detailed categorisation of incidents.

### Inclusion Criteria

Incidents are included where there is **observable and reasonably verifiable evidence** that an act, statement, policy, practice, or institutional response involves differential treatment or impact affecting individuals or groups identifiable by race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion.

An incident must meet at least one of the following indicators:

- **Explicit Discrimination:** Direct differential treatment, exclusion, or restriction based on racial, ethnic, national, or religious identity;
- **Discriminatory Impact:** Practices or policies that result in disproportionate disadvantage to a particular group, regardless of intent;
- **Hate Speech or Hostility:** Public expressions that promote or justify prejudice, hostility, or stereotyping against a protected group;
- **Institutional Conduct:** Actions or omissions by state or non-state institutions that raise concerns of bias, unequal protection, or discriminatory enforcement.

Incidents are assessed based on available evidence rather than the level of public attention they receive. Media visibility or public outrage may inform contextual analysis but **does not determine inclusion**.

### Verification Process

All incidents undergo a verification process to ensure reliability. An incident is included where it satisfies at least one of the following:

- Corroboration by **two or more independent sources**; or
- Confirmation by **one primary source** (e.g., official statement, direct record, audio-visual evidence) supported by supplementary material.

Where information remains inconclusive, incidents are excluded or clearly identified as unverified.

## Legal Framework

This report is grounded in a composite legal framework that integrates international human rights standards with domestic constitutional principles. These frameworks are not treated as merely descriptive references, but as normative and interpretive benchmarks guiding the identification, assessment, and categorisation of incidents documented in this report.

At the core of this framework is the principle of equality and non-discrimination, as articulated in the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**. This foundational principle informs the report's overarching approach, establishing that all individuals are entitled to equal protection of the law and freedom from discriminatory treatment on grounds including race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality.

The report further draws on the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)** as the primary source for defining racial discrimination. In line with Article 1 of ICERD, racial discrimination is understood to encompass any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of impairing the recognition, enjoyment, or exercise of human rights. While Malaysia is not a State Party to ICERD, its definitional framework is adopted as an authoritative international standard for analytical consistency.

The concept of xenophobia is informed by interpretive guidance from the **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**, especially in understanding discrimination directed at non-nationals or perceived outsiders. This framework is applied to capture forms of discrimination that may not fall strictly within racial categorisations but nonetheless produce similar exclusionary effects.

In assessing hate speech and incitement, the report adopts the threshold test articulated in the **Rabat Plan of Action**, developed under the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**. The Rabat framework provides a structured six-part test—considering context, speaker, intent, content, extent, and likelihood of harm—to distinguish between protected expression and advocacy that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence. This ensures that the report's analysis of speech-related incidents remains principled and consistent with international standards on freedom of expression.

These international frameworks are read together with domestic legal standards, particularly the Federal Constitution of Malaysia, which guarantees equality before the law under Article 8 while also recognising specific provisions relating to affirmative measures. The report does not treat affirmative action as inherently discriminatory; rather, it evaluates such measures within the broader human rights principle that differential treatment must be justifiable, proportionate, and directed toward legitimate objectives.

The detailed definitions and interpretive standards underpinning each of these frameworks are set out in **Annex 1**. This Annex forms an integral part of the report and should be read

together with this section, as it provides the doctrinal basis for the classification and analysis of incidents.

### Scope and Limitations

This report documents incidents that occurred in 2025, primarily focusing on those that gained public attention during that period. Incidents are categorised based on their primary context or field of impact.

The report addresses both interpersonal and structural forms of discrimination. This includes racist statements, exclusionary practices, discriminatory treatment, stereotyping, harmful rhetoric, and institutional or policy measures that may produce unequal outcomes along racial, ethnic, religious, national-origin, or related lines. While each incident is assigned a primary category, some cases may span multiple themes. In such instances, the main context or field of impact guides our categorisation and analysis, with overlaps addressed where necessary.

Furthermore, this report draws primarily on verified and publicly accessible sources, including mainstream media, official statements, government reports, and direct submissions to KOMAS. Informal online content—such as social media comments, discussion forums, or Reddit posts—is generally excluded unless the material has been widely circulated, reported on, or verified as having broader public impact.

This report does not claim to capture every instance of racism or racial and religious discrimination in Malaysia in 2025. The reliance on publicly available material—defined here as widely accessible mass media, official publications, and verified submissions—means that some incidents may be underrepresented or omitted. Media coverage is uneven across geographical regions, resulting in some areas being less visible due to limited reporting. Each reported incident is manually reviewed and sifted by Pusat KOMAS' staff without the use of AI tools or automated data collection methods, ensuring that contextual accuracy and relevance guide inclusion.

Additional limitations include the availability of resources, time constraints, and the capacity to verify every incident in detail. As intimated, Pusat KOMAS relies on a small team to manually review, sift, and analyse reported incidents, which inherently limits the volume of data that can be processed within the reporting period. The evolving nature of cases also poses challenges, as some incidents may still be under investigation, subject to legal proceedings, or contested by involved parties at the time of writing. Furthermore, certain incidents may go unreported due to fear, social stigma, or lack of access to reporting mechanisms, while media coverage is uneven across different geographical regions, resulting in lower visibility of events in rural or underrepresented areas. Direct reports to Pusat KOMAS help broaden the scope of the report and capture incidents that might otherwise be missed; however, they do not eliminate these limitations, and readers should interpret the findings as a structured documentation of trends rather than a definitive national record.

# 1 RACISM IN SOCIAL SETTINGS

Racism in social settings generally refers to the expression or experience of racial and religious discrimination within the spaces of everyday life that affect persons at the community level. This includes workplaces, educational institutions, housing and rental contexts, as well as other public or semi-public settings where individuals interact, access services, or participate in society.

Unlike incidents that arise in formal political arenas or through public statements by prominent figures, racism in social settings often manifests in more immediate and interpersonal ways. These may include exclusion, stereotyping, unequal treatment, discriminatory hiring or rental practices, and hostile behaviour based on race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion. Such incidents, while sometimes less visible in mainstream discourse, remain among the clearest ways in which discrimination is felt in the daily lives of affected communities.

In Malaysia, racism in social settings is shaped by wider structural and societal attitudes, including long-standing assumptions about race, religion, language, and belonging. As a result, discrimination in these spaces does not occur in isolation, but often reflects the same prejudices and hierarchies that are reproduced in broader public and political life.

## 1.1 Racism in Business/Workplace

Employment is a fundamental pathway to economic security, dignity, and social participation. Under international human rights and labour standards, all individuals are entitled to equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment, free from discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, descent, or national origin. In Malaysia, however, racism in employment remains a persistent and under-addressed concern.

Racism in the employment sector manifests at multiple stages of the employment relationship, including recruitment, hiring, remuneration, promotion, and termination. Discriminatory job advertisements specifying racial preferences, unequal access to career advancement, workplace harassment, and exclusionary organisational cultures continue to be reported across various industries. These practices disproportionately affect certain communities, limiting economic mobility and entrenching structural inequality.

The impact of employment-related racism extends beyond individual workers. Systemic exclusion from meaningful employment opportunities contributes to income disparity, social marginalisation, and inter-generational disadvantage. It also undermines productivity, workplace cohesion, and the broader goal of inclusive economic development in Malaysia.

From a human rights perspective, racial discrimination in employment violates the principles of equality and non-discrimination recognised under international instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and core International Labour Organization conventions. While Malaysia has existing legal and policy frameworks governing employment relations, gaps in enforcement, awareness, and accountability continue to allow discriminatory practices to persist.

This section examines the prevalence, manifestations, and impact of racism within the Malaysian employment landscape. It also serves as a focal lens through which the challenges faced by ordinary Malaysians can be understood, particularly those who are subjected to racial prejudice and degrading treatment in the course of earning their livelihood.

Date	Incident
17/02/2025	<b>A corn vendor put up a sign prohibiting sale to Indians using slur.</b> The sign which said “ <i>Sorry ini jagung tiada jual sama orang k*ling</i> ” (Sorry, this corn is not sold to [slur]). The vendor later apologised publicly. <sup>1</sup>
07/03/2025	<b>Mixue Sri Sinar's racially discriminatory hiring poster</b> with the criteria being 'Malay and Chinese with experience'. <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Corn Seller Who Sparked Racial Controversy Apologises.” *The Vibes*, February 17, 2025. <https://www.thevibes.com/articles/news/105002/corn-seller-who-sparked-racial-controversy-apologises>

<sup>2</sup> Jayne, Tamara. “Popular Segambut Bubble Tea Outlet Called Out for Malay & Chinese-Only Job Ad.” *SAYS*, March 10, 2025. <https://says.com/my/news/mixue-called-out-for-malay-chinese-only-job-ad>

25/03/2025	<b>A Dayak sales assistant verbally abused with racial slurs</b> and threatened over a mere 50 cents, with the perpetrator allegedly threatening to handcuff the sales assistant. <sup>3</sup>
16/04/2025	<b>HYGR ad depicting an Indian person (illustrated as such) emitting body odour</b> was deemed offensive due to the stereotype associated with South Asians/Indians and strong body odour. <sup>4</sup>
23/04/2025	<b>Offensive message sent by a GrabFood rider</b> to a customer which wrote "Oii sampai. Tak mau ambik makanan jangan order p*kimak Hindu" which translates to "Oi, [I have] arrived. If you don't want to take the food, don't order (slur) Hindu." <sup>5</sup>
24/07/2025	<b>Hospital Canselor Tuanku Muhriz (HCTM) awarded a catering contract to a company that did not possess halal certification</b> which amounted to RM25.6mil. <sup>6</sup>
14/10/2025	<b>Racist Indian/Hindu stereotypes used in promotion video</b> which features a car accessory shop worker delivering a caricaturised Deepavali greeting and promoting shop discounts. <sup>7</sup>
10/11/2025	<b>Image of the Hindu deity Lord Murugan used on a US Pizza outlet packaging</b> which may contain non-vegetarian or beef items and may end up being thrown away as trash <sup>8</sup>

Based on Pusat KOMAS' exploratory observation, there are 8 incidents reported under this title. Despite consistent calls from various parties to ensure equal opportunities are afforded in the employment sector, the reality on the ground displays racism in its truest form. One reported incident from an X user highlights the "additional" criteria in a job advertisement posted by a popular beverage franchise in which it was seeking applicants who are "Malays and Chinese with experience".

Further, we have found that larger corporations and/or franchises ought to sensitise themselves to cultural sensitivities. In a reported case, a Hindu deity was found printed on food packaging belonging to an established pizza outlet in Malaysia. In another unrelated

<sup>3</sup> "Police Urged to Investigate Viral Video of Dayak Woman Allegedly Threatened, Racially Abused in Shah Alam." *Bernama*, March 25, 2025. <https://bernama.com/en/general/news.php?id=2406254>

<sup>4</sup> "Prasarana Removes Personal Care Ad from Train After Outcry." *Free Malaysia Today*, April 16, 2025. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/04/16/prasarana-removes-personal-care-ad-from-train-after-outcry/>

<sup>5</sup> Alyaa Alhadjri. "'Pu\*\*mak Hindu' – Teacher Lodges Report Against Delivery Rider." *Malaysiakini*, April 23, 2025. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/741179>

<sup>6</sup> "Hospital Gave RM25.6mil Catering Contract to Company Without Halal Cert." *Free Malaysia Today*, July 21, 2025. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/07/21/hospital-gave-rm25-6mil-catering-contract-to-company-without-halal-cert>

<sup>7</sup> @nasidaily. "Video." *TikTok*, accessed March 5, 2026. [https://www.tiktok.com/@nasidaily/video/7560631170749189394?\\_r=1&\\_t=ZS-90inHvoEt3g](https://www.tiktok.com/@nasidaily/video/7560631170749189394?_r=1&_t=ZS-90inHvoEt3g)

<sup>8</sup> Hindu NGO Calls Out US Pizza Malaysia Over Depiction of Lord Murugan, Here's Why." *World of Buzz*, November 9, 2025. <https://worldofbuzz.com/hindu-ngo-calls-out-us-pizza-malaysia-over-depiction-of-lord-murugan-on-packaging-heres-why/>

incident, a government audit on a public hospital has found that the company who obtained its catering contract did not obtain proper halal certification.

### Lack of cultural sensitivities

For far too long Malaysians have lived with each other and we ought to be accustomed with one's beliefs and religious and/or cultural sensitivities. Pusat KOMAS believes that the incidents captured under this title should not have been an issue in the first place. It should be noted that ignorance and complacency do not absolve corporations nor individuals from bearing responsibility over their racist behaviours. We are convinced that in all the highlighted incidents, there would have been appropriate measures that could have been taken before a job advertisement is posted or a design of a packaging is produced. It is widely understood that halal certification holds significant importance for Muslims.

The incidents above depict conscious conduct by certain individuals and corporations with complete disregard of preserving peace and harmony in Malaysia.

### **Recommendations**

- Business sectors especially enterprises with a head count of more than 50 employees to establish internal guidelines to promote, advocate and uphold culture sensitivities in the work place.
- MNC, SME and other private sector to be encouraged to have adopted the Malaysia Business in Human Rights Action Plan especially on the framework of non-discrimination
- GLC's and GLIC's to implement the Code of Conduct for the promotion of equal opportunity through the elimination of racial discrimination<sup>9</sup> ([KOMAS-Code-of-Conduct.pdf](#))

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<sup>9</sup> Pusat KOMAS, Penang Institute, and Human Rights Commission of Malaysia (SUHAKAM). *Code of Conduct*. Kuala Lumpur: SUHAKAM, 2020. <https://komas.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/16/2020/03/KOMAS-Code-of-Conduct.pdf>

## 1.2 Racism in Education

Schools and institutions of learning are often imagined as spaces of equal opportunity to gain knowledge and develop one's intellect—places where merit, curiosity, and effort determine one's future. For many students in Malaysia, however, educational spaces can also become sites where racial difference is marked, reinforced, and—at times—penalised.

Racism in education does not always present itself in explicit or confrontational ways. It is often embedded in everyday practices: the language used in classrooms, assumptions about students' abilities, unequal access to resources, or informal systems that advantage some while marginalising others. Over time, these experiences shape how students see themselves, their peers, and their place within society.

The consequences are profound and enduring. Studies<sup>10</sup> show students who encounter racial bias—whether through exclusion, stereotyping, or unequal treatment—are likely to be subjected to trauma which leads to decreased confidence and motivation, eroding academic performances which, in turn, affects long term social and economic mobility. For those already facing structural disadvantage, educational racism could compound existing inequalities and narrow pathways for advancement.

Education also plays a critical role in shaping societal values in learning to coexist in a diverse society. When discriminatory norms go unchallenged within schools and universities, they risk being normalised and carried into workplaces, institutions, and public life. Conversely, inclusive and equitable educational environments have the potential to disrupt cycles of prejudice and foster mutual understanding across communities.

Date	Incident
23/03/2025	<b>Kerian teacher told a student to “go back to China” over poor Malay language proficiency</b> and was later recorded saying it was not her first time making such remarks. The teacher also reportedly said that if the student and parent could not speak Malay they should “head back to China.” <sup>11</sup>
09/06/2025	<b>Race-based university admissions quotas reignited discrimination concerns after top-scoring students were denied placements</b> in government pre-university programmes despite strong academic and co-curricular records, prompting renewed criticism of quota-based admissions. <sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Loung, M et al. “The Impact of Racism and Ethnic Discrimination on Students’ Education Experiences.” *Journal of Outdoor Teacher Education* (JOTE). Eastern Kentucky University

<sup>11</sup> “Political scientist: Teacher telling off pupil to ‘balik China’ for poor grasp of BM should be booted out” *Focus Malaysia*. March 24, 2025.

<https://focusmalaysia.my/political-scientist-teacher-telling-off-pupil-to-balik-china-for-poor-grasp-of-bm-should-be-booted-out/>

<sup>12</sup> Neo, Chai Chin. “Malaysian Top Scorers’ Hopes for Pre-University Spots Dashed, Reigniting Fairness Debate.” *The Straits Times*, July 3, 2025. <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/malaysian-top-scorers-hopes-for-pre-uni-spots-dashed-reigniting-fairness-debate>

23/07/2025	<b>Orang Asli stereotyping remarks were allegedly made by a teacher following a school disciplinary incident</b> after students from SMK Kuala Lanar were reprimanded for supporting SMK RPS Batau during a football event. During a later class, a teacher reportedly described Orang Asli students as creating social gaps and not mixing with “regular people.” <sup>13</sup>
07/10/2025	<b>Examination schedules of school and university examinations near Deepavali were criticised</b> by YB Ganabathirau, saying that they were too close to the festival, calling it unfair and disrespectful to the Indian community. The issue renewed concerns that Deepavali receives a shorter break period than other major festivals, affecting Indian students’ ability to celebrate without academic pressure. <sup>14</sup>
14/10/2025	<b>YB Datuk Dr Akmal Saleh had questioned whether UMANY would agree if the government abolished vernacular schools</b> as a response to their statement calling for the abolition of the matriculation programme and use STPM results as the sole benchmark for entry to public universities. <sup>15</sup>
10/12/2025	<b>Racialised backlash over UEC recognition resurfaced following public debate</b> after calls to officially recognise the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) triggered criticism on Malay social media. The backlash framed UEC recognition as a threat to Malay interests. <sup>16</sup>

In 2025, Pusat KOMAS identified 6 incidents within the education sector. Sadly, we find ourselves rehashing certain incidents relating to the education sector such as the Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) issue and the quota system from our past reports.

### UEC and vernacular schools

We observed an incident that arose from public statements made by Nga Kor Ming concerning the recognition of the UEC. The remarks reignited long-standing racialised narratives weaponising the UEC issue as a political and ethnic threat, particularly framing it to stoke fears in regard to Chinese education and alleged dominance by certain political parties. We further observed media coverage and public reactions demonstrated how education policy debates in Malaysia are frequently racialised, reinforcing mistrust between communities rather than fostering substantive policy dialogue.

<sup>13</sup> Report made to Pusat KOMAS’ official portal

<sup>14</sup> Ganabathirau Veraman. “School and University Exams During Deepavali: A Question of Fairness and Respect”, Facebook. Accessed 30th October 2025. [https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story\\_fbid=1172437138077237&id=100059328861960&post\\_id=100059328861960\\_1172437138077237&rdid=qHlH6tCZjdFQIGP3#](https://www.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1172437138077237&id=100059328861960&post_id=100059328861960_1172437138077237&rdid=qHlH6tCZjdFQIGP3#)

<sup>15</sup> “No police report, no probe’ - minister on Akmal’s vernacular school remark” *Malaysiakini*, October 15, 2025. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/757988>

<sup>16</sup> Zikri Kamarulzaman. “Isu iktiraf UEC: Kenyataan Nga bangkitkan semula gambaran momok DAP” December 10, 2025 <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/763054>

This racialisation was exacerbated further by Datuk Dr Akmal Saleh when he used the abolition of vernacular schools as a counternarrative to Umany's call of using STPM as opposed to matriculation as the sole benchmark to determine entrance to public universities.

In addition to the above, a viral social media post documented allegations of a school teacher verbally humiliating and insulting a student. While the incident involved an individual educator, public reaction highlighted broader concerns about power imbalance, racial bias, and discriminatory language in Malaysian schools. The case underscores how everyday interactions within educational institutions can perpetuate emotional harm and reinforce exclusion, particularly when authority figures are involved.

### *Cultural insensitivities*

Concerns were raised regarding the scheduling of school and university examinations during Deepavali, a major Hindu religious festival. The issue was framed as one of systemic insensitivity, where administrative decisions disproportionately burden minority religious communities. Public commentary, including by YB Ganabatirau Veraman, emphasised that such practices marginalise religious minorities and reflect structural inequities in policy planning.

### *Longstanding discrimination against the Orang Asli's / Asal's*

In Pahang, an Orang Asli student reportedly faced discriminatory treatment involving a school laboratory assistant, disciplinary teacher, and moral education teacher. The incident illustrates how indigenous students remain vulnerable to institutional prejudice and stereotyping within the education system. The case reflects broader structural marginalisation of Orang Asli communities, where discrimination often manifests through routine disciplinary and administrative actions.

### *Meritocracy*

Still persistent in 2025, Pusat KOMAS through our report found that high-achieving students reportedly failed to secure pre-university placements, prompting renewed debate on meritocracy, affirmative action, and racial equity in education pathways. In this instance, a high achieving student who obtained 10As with a near-perfect merit score of 99.46 out of 100 for her SPM achievements and co-curricular activities was left out in the Malaysian matriculation programme despite the Prime Minister ensuring meritocracy for students obtaining said results in 2024.

## Recommendations

- The MOE and MOHE should adopt a more open and supportive approach toward NGO-led programmes that raise awareness of racism and promote anti-racism, such as the *Bangsa Malaysia* Workshop. These initiatives, together with other cultural exchange activities, play an important role in fostering understanding, respect, and appreciation of Malaysia's diverse communities.
- Teacher training institutes and higher education programmes should incorporate modules that cultivate educators who respect all Malaysians, uphold meritocracy, and champion equality and equity. This will help ensure that future teachers and lecturers serve as advocates for inclusive values within their classrooms and institutions.
- The government should adopt clear, consistent, and coherent messaging across all school systems in Malaysia. Transparent communication and equitable treatment of different school types are essential to reducing perceptions of discrimination and fostering a more unified national education landscape.
- Malaysia should also promote healthy academic competition to nurture a generation of high-performing individuals who can contribute meaningfully to national development. This includes reviewing policies such as quota-based admissions to public universities, with a view toward moving to a more merit-based system that recognises talent and effort.

### **1.3 Racism in Rental/Housing Sector**

Racism in Malaysia's housing sector operates through both direct interpersonal discrimination and broader structural conditions that enable exclusion. In the private rental market, landlords and property agents often exercise wide discretion in tenant selection. This has resulted in documented cases where prospective tenants are rejected on the basis of race or ethnicity, sometimes explicitly and at other times through coded justifications. Such practices reflect deeply embedded social biases and contribute to unequal access to housing, particularly for racial minorities and marginalised communities.

Beyond individual acts of bias, structural and institutional gaps play a significant role in sustaining discriminatory outcomes. Malaysia's housing and rental frameworks provide limited explicit legal protection against racial discrimination in access to accommodation. The absence of clear enforcement mechanisms allows discriminatory practices to persist largely unchecked, with affected individuals having few effective avenues for redress. This regulatory vacuum normalises exclusion as a private choice rather than recognising it as a rights-based issue.

Socioeconomic inequalities further intensify racialised housing outcomes. Minority and indigenous communities, including Orang Asli groups, are disproportionately affected by lower income levels, geographic marginalisation, and reduced access to formal credit or stable employment. These factors intersect with racial prejudice to confine such communities to less desirable or insecure housing, reinforcing patterns of segregation and vulnerability over time.

Public discourse on housing discrimination often minimises the systemic nature of the problem by framing incidents as isolated or anecdotal. However, the increasing circulation of personal accounts through social media and news reporting has revealed recurring patterns of racial exclusion, challenging the perception that such cases are exceptional. These narratives have become an important form of informal documentation, exposing everyday racism that is otherwise absent from official data.

To sum, racism in Malaysia's housing sector reflects a combination of personal prejudice and structural weaknesses in regulation and policy in both the state and federal level. Without stronger legal safeguards and public acknowledgment of the systemic nature of housing discrimination, racial inequality in access to safe and affordable housing is likely to persist, continuing to affect social mobility, security, and a sense of belonging for marginalised communities.

Date	Incident
14/4/2025	<b>Landlord allegedly rejected Putra Heights fire victim from renting a unit on racial grounds</b> after a property agent reportedly told her that the landlord did not want Indian tenants because they “do a lot of heavy cooking.” <sup>17</sup>
08/06/2025	<b>A Kadazan man was reportedly told he was not eligible to rent a room because it was for “local Malaysians only”</b> after he disclosed that he was of Kadazan descent, raising concerns over racial and ethnic discrimination in rental practices. <sup>18</sup>
23/09/2025	<b>Banner in Bandar Baru Bangi residential area called for the rejection of foreign tenants in 2026</b> after a banner promoting a “zero foreign tenant” target drew public attention. <sup>19</sup>

Pusat KOMAS observed three cases in 2025 that pertains to racism in the Housing / Rental Sector. The three cases underscored under this theme however, do not reflect the actual issues on the ground as there may be many more incidents that are sadly swept under the carpet and remain unchecked.

#### Racism disguised as preference

Following a fire incident in Putra Heights, a woman who was affected by the disaster sought rental accommodation as part of her recovery process. During her attempt to secure housing, she was allegedly rejected by a landlord after the property agent conveyed the landlord’s refusal. The justification reportedly given was that people of her race “do a lot of heavy cooking,” implying concerns over cleanliness, smell, or property damage.

The rejection was explicitly linked to the tenant’s racial identity and associated stereotypes. The phrase “heavy cooking” is a commonly used racialised trope in Malaysia, often deployed to justify the exclusion of certain ethnic groups—particularly Indians from rental housing. Although the discriminatory statement was conveyed through a property agent, it reflects the landlord’s underlying bias and decision-making process.

In one reported incident, a Kadazan man was refused the opportunity to rent a room after being told the accommodation was only for “local Malaysians.” This kind of exclusion

<sup>17</sup> Azri Azizan. “Putra Heights Fire Victim Rejected by Landlord Who Allegedly Claimed Her Race ‘Does a Lot of Heavy Cooking’” *World of Buzz*. April 14, 2025. <https://worldofbuzz.com/putra-heights-fire-victim-rejected-by-landlord-who-allegedly-claimed-her-race-does-a-lot-of-heavy-cooking/>

<sup>18</sup> Sandra Sokial. “Kadazan man told not ‘Malaysian enough’ to rent room in Puchong” *The Star*. June 8, 2025. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/06/08/kadazan-man-told-not-039malaysian-enough039-to-rent-room-in-puchong>

<sup>19</sup> Hizam Jaafar. “Kain Rentang Sasaran Sifar Penyewa Warga Asing Pada Tahun 2026 Di Sebuah Residensi Jadi Perhatian Ramai” *Vocket*. September 23, 2025. <https://thevocket.com/kain-rentang-sasaran-sifar-penyewa-warga-asing-pada-tahun-2026-di-sebuah-residensi-jadi-perhatian-ramai/>

highlights how misunderstandings and prejudices can sometimes surface even within the same country. In Malaysia's multi-ethnic context, incidents like this reflect broader social challenges, including lack of awareness about equal citizenship and subtle forms of bias against East Malaysian communities like the Kadazan-Dusun. People from Sabah and Sarawak are full Malaysian citizens, but they sometimes face ignorance or stereotypes when dealing with people from Peninsular Malaysia – as evidenced in social discussions where others have shared similar experiences of being treated as if they were “not Malaysian enough.”

Further, Pusat KOMAS has, in its previous reports, highlighted incidents where local communities have erected banners expressing aspirations for residential areas with zero migrants. In a similar vein, in 2025, a local community in Bangi displayed a prominently coloured banner stating its aim of achieving a “zero migrant” community by 2026.

Such banners perpetuate long-standing prejudices by implicitly portraying migrants as a source of problems. Notably, the term “migrants” is often left undefined, yet a discernible pattern emerges in which differential treatment is afforded to migrants and expatriates, with the latter frequently being treated with greater acceptance, respect, and welcome.

These cases are emblematic of wider patterns of racial discrimination within Malaysia's largely unregulated private rental market. The absence of clear legal prohibitions against racial bias in housing allows landlords to exercise unchecked discretion. As a result, discriminatory refusals are often treated as personal preferences rather than violations of equality or human rights. The lack of protection for house renters amplifies the discrimination among communities and almost no platform to submit a complaint by the victims.

### **Recommendations**

- Comprehensive studies on the challenges faced by private renters and prospective tenants should be undertaken to better understand systemic issues and to inform evidence-based policy reforms.
- A dedicated complaints bureau and tribunal should be established to address cases involving human rights violations in the rental market. Such a mechanism would provide tenants and prospective renters with a formal avenue to resolve disputes and achieve fair and amicable outcomes.

## 1.4 Others

Racism can manifest in subtle and indirect ways that go beyond overt hostility or explicit discrimination. One form is cultural exclusion, where the traditions, practices, or contributions of certain communities are overlooked or marginalised in public, institutional, or national spaces. Even when decisions are made on procedural or administrative grounds, consistently omitting minority cultural expressions can reinforce feelings of invisibility and devaluation, limiting recognition and participation in broader society.

Another form is the promotion of ethnocentric or supremacist narratives, in which one group's history, achievements, or cultural identity is portrayed as inherently superior to others. Such narratives, even if framed as academic or cultural pride, can implicitly marginalise other communities, entrench stereotypes, and create hierarchies within a diverse society. Both omission and assertion, therefore, act as mechanisms through which racism operates subtly: shaping perceptions, reinforcing social inequalities, and undermining communal cohesion, even in the absence of overt hostility.

Both cultural omission and ethnocentric assertion illustrate how racism can operate subtly yet powerfully, shaping perceptions of belonging, influencing social interactions, and entrenching inequalities. Unlike overt acts of discrimination, these forms of racism are often embedded in everyday decisions, public narratives, and institutional practices, making them harder to detect but no less harmful. Left unaddressed, they can undermine communal cohesion, weaken intergroup trust, and hinder the development of an inclusive society in which all communities feel respected and valued.

Date	Incident
05/08/2025	<b>Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh has cautioned the public against racializing the exclusion of silambam</b> , a traditional Indian martial art, from the 2026 Malaysia Games (Sukma), emphasized that the decision rests solely with the host state, consistent with past Sukma editions, and urged critics to avoid injecting racial sentiments into sports decisions. <sup>20</sup>
18/11/2025	<b>Associate Professor Solehah Yaacob of IIUM claimed an unevicenced hypothesis that the ancient Romans learned shipbuilding from the Malay civilization</b> . This sparked a "syiok sendiri" supremacist narrative of Malay superiority among supporters, intensifying backlash. <sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/08/07/dont-racialise-silambams-exclusion-from-2026-sukma-says-yeoh>

<sup>21</sup> [https://focusmalaysia.my/backers-start-peddling-syiok-sendiri-supremacist-narrative-as-prof-solehah-initiate-counter-strike-against-critics/?fbclid=IwdGRzaAOCB0JjbGNrA4IGdmV4dG4DYWVtAjExAHNyGMGYXBwX2lkDDM1MDY4NTUzMTcyOAABHrsBSLyWvBNG1EI-FZpysJNFCeyvThIK2O62z8ibquBoEtDwY1iEfVK-jOUi\\_aem\\_XI8qm-rAfWhilmBtCgQHgzg&sfnsn=wa#](https://focusmalaysia.my/backers-start-peddling-syiok-sendiri-supremacist-narrative-as-prof-solehah-initiate-counter-strike-against-critics/?fbclid=IwdGRzaAOCB0JjbGNrA4IGdmV4dG4DYWVtAjExAHNyGMGYXBwX2lkDDM1MDY4NTUzMTcyOAABHrsBSLyWvBNG1EI-FZpysJNFCeyvThIK2O62z8ibquBoEtDwY1iEfVK-jOUi_aem_XI8qm-rAfWhilmBtCgQHgzg&sfnsn=wa#)

The controversy surrounding the exclusion of silambam from the 2026 Malaysia Games (SUKMA) illustrates how quickly administrative decisions can be racialised in a multicultural context. Silambam, a traditional Indian martial art, carries cultural significance for segments of the Indian community in Malaysia. When it was omitted from the upcoming SUKMA edition, criticism emerged suggesting marginalisation of Indian heritage. However, Youth and Sports Minister Hannah Yeoh cautioned against framing the matter in racial terms, explaining that the selection of events lies with the host state and that such discretion has been consistent in previous editions. The episode demonstrates how policy or logistical decisions – even if procedurally neutral – can be interpreted through a racial lens when trust deficits exist. If not carefully addressed, such narratives risk deepening perceptions of exclusion, reinforcing communal grievances, and politicising sporting platforms that are intended to promote unity.

In an unrelated incident to the above, the incident involving Associate Professor Solehah Yaacob at International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) reflects a different but equally concerning dynamic – the emergence of racialised supremacy narratives in response to academic criticism. After claiming that ancient Romans learned shipbuilding from Malay civilisation, her hypothesis was widely challenged for lacking credible historical evidence. Rather than remaining confined to scholarly debate, the controversy escalated into online exchanges in which supporters advanced what was described as a “*syiok sendiri*” supremacist narrative, portraying Malay civilisation as inherently superior. Such rhetoric risks transforming intellectual disagreement into ethnocentric assertion. When historical claims are framed in civilisational superiority terms, they can inadvertently marginalise other communities and undermine the pluralistic foundations of Malaysian identity. IIUM’s clarification that the remarks were made in a personal capacity highlights institutional sensitivity to the broader implications of such claims.

Both cases underscore how racism or racial tension may stem not only from overtly discriminatory acts, but also from reactions, framing, and narratives that accompany public controversies. Sporting decisions and academic debates, if racialised, can morph into symbols of communal contestation. The key risk lies in the amplification of identity-based narratives that shift focus away from procedural or evidentiary issues toward collective grievance or superiority. In a diverse society, responsible leadership, careful communication, and measured public discourse are essential to prevent ordinary disagreements from escalating into racial polarisation.

#### **Recommendation**

- There is a need to amplify positive, inclusive, and unifying messages on social media that promote social cohesion and encourage Malaysians to value and respect one another across ethnic and cultural lines.
- Political parties and individuals in positions of influence should refrain from

spreading hate, divisive rhetoric, or misinformation. Instead, they should prioritise fostering a shared vision for Malaysia's future, grounded in the principles and foundations established by our forefathers.

## **2 RACISM IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND POLICY**

Racism in public discourse and policy generally refers to the expression, circulation, or legitimisation of racial and religious prejudice through public statements, narratives, debates, and policy positions advanced by figures in the public domain. This includes incidents involving political actors, commentators, institutions, and other influential voices whose statements or actions shape wider public perceptions and social attitudes

Such incidents may take place through openly prejudicial remarks, inflammatory rhetoric, xenophobic narratives, or the framing of certain communities as threats, outsiders, or less deserving of equal treatment. They may also arise through policies or proposals that reinforce unequal treatment, exclusion, or racial and religious distinctions. In this way, racism in public discourse and policy does not merely reflect existing prejudice, but can also normalise and reproduce it on a broader scale.

In Malaysia, public discourse on race and religion has long played a significant role in shaping social and political life. Debates over identity, rights, belonging, and policy often extend beyond formal institutions and into the wider public sphere, where discriminatory narratives can circulate rapidly and with significant influence. For this reason, incidents in this category are important not only for what they reveal about public sentiment, but also for how they may legitimise discriminatory thinking and affect inter-community relations more broadly.

## 2.1 Racism through Governmental Policies

Racism through policy and governance in Malaysia is most often expressed not through explicitly discriminatory laws, but through structural arrangements, policy decisions, and administrative practices that produce unequal outcomes along racial and ethnic lines. These forms of racism are frequently justified using the language of history, social stability, or national identity, which can obscure their exclusionary impact and make them harder to challenge.

Insofar as policy is concerned, racial differentiation is embedded in several areas of governance, particularly in education, housing, economic participation, and access to public resources. Policies framed around ethnicity—most notably affirmative action mechanisms have, over time, shaped public institutions and distribution systems in ways that privilege certain groups while marginalising others. While such policies are often defended as corrective or protective, their long-term implementation without clear sunset clauses or needs-based recalibration or remeasurement has contributed to perceptions of systemic inequality and racialised entitlement.

Malaysia's New Economic Policy (NEP), originally introduced in 1971 to address post-1969 racial economic disparities, continues to benefit the Bumiputera majority but often misses its intended target of low-income communities. While the policy was meant to uplift economically disadvantaged Bumiputera, today a significant portion of the beneficiaries come from middle- and upper-income brackets, leaving many in genuine need—both Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera—excluded from meaningful support.

Asset restrictions, such as Bumiputera-only property lots that cannot be sold to other racial groups, further limit economic mobility and create illiquidity for intended beneficiaries. Geographic inequities compound these challenges: individuals from Sabah and Sarawak frequently face stricter requirements or bias when renting properties in Peninsular Malaysia, reflecting informal barriers that are not codified but nonetheless impactful.

In addition, racial quotas continue to shape access across key sectors. Government-Linked Companies (GLCs) require a certain number of Bumiputera directors or senior managers, public universities maintain Bumiputera admission quotas, and public service hiring and promotion often prioritize Bumiputera candidates. While these measures increase representation for the majority race, they do not necessarily target those in economic need and can marginalize non-Bumiputera individuals, as well as lower-income Bumiputera who may not fully benefit from the system.

Governance practices further reinforce these dynamics through administrative discretion and opaque decision-making. In sectors such as education and housing, selection criteria, placement mechanisms, and eligibility thresholds are not always transparent, enabling racial bias whether intentional or structural to influence outcomes. The lack of publicly accessible data disaggregated by race also limits meaningful oversight and accountability, making it difficult to assess whether policies are operating equitably.

To restore balance, political discourse plays a central role in sustaining racism through governance. Policy debates are frequently framed in racialised terms, portraying reforms aimed at equality or inclusion as threats to the rights or status of particular communities. This narrative framing legitimises exclusionary positions and discourages cross-racial solidarity, while shifting attention away from evidence-based policy evaluation. In this context, governance becomes an avenue where racial anxieties are mobilised for political legitimacy rather than addressed through inclusive policymaking.

Institutional responses to discrimination often reflect weak enforcement and limited political will. Complaints mechanisms may exist in theory but are constrained by narrow mandates, fear of reprisal, or lack of independence. As a result, individuals affected by racially discriminatory policies or administrative actions frequently have little recourse, reinforcing a sense that unequal treatment is normalised and state sanctioned.

Date	Incident
05/08/2025	<b>Bumiputera affirmative action policy was defended during trade negotiations with the United States</b> after Prime Minister YAB Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim despite being recognised as discriminatory. <sup>22</sup>
05/08/2025	<b>KL Structure Plan 2040 drew criticism over a proposal to maintain a 40% Malay and Bumiputera population in Kuala Lumpur</b> after Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department Dr. Zaliha Mustafa stated in Parliament that the plan includes measures such as allocating affordable housing, shops, and light industry on Malay reserve land and MAS land to preserve the demographic target. <sup>23</sup>
10/12/2025	<b>Woman was barred from entering Jasin police headquarters to lodge a traffic accident report due to dress-code enforcement</b> after she was reportedly denied entry for allegedly violating a dress code set out in a government circular <sup>24</sup>

In this regard, Prime Minister, Anwar Ibrahim is spotlighted in an incident relating to trade negotiations with foreign nations where he purported that Bumiputera policies cannot be interfered with.

In an article published by *Malay Mail*, the Prime Minister stated that Malaysia defended its Bumiputera policies during trade negotiations with the United States. While the remarks

<sup>22</sup> Bernama. “Anwar: Malaysia defended Bumiputera policy in US trade talks, resisted pressure on key policies” *Malay Mail*. August 5, 2025. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/08/05/anwar-malaysia-defended-bumiputera-policy-in-us-trade-talks-resisted-pressure-on-key-policies/186509>

<sup>23</sup> Bernama. “KL Plan 2040 aims to maintain 40pct Malay, Bumiputera population” *New Straits Times*. August 5, 2025. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/08/1255815/kl-plan-2040-aims-maintain-40pct-malay-bumiputera-population>

<sup>24</sup> M.Esshwer & Teh Athira Yusoff. “Underdressed woman unable to enter Jasin police HQ” *The Star*. December 10, 2025 <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/12/10/underdressed-woman-unable-to-enter-jasin-police-hq>

made were in the context of international trade discussions, the issue raised is a domestic one—the continued place of Bumiputera policies within Malaysia’s policy framework despite longstanding concerns over their discriminatory implications. The Prime Minister described it as a key national policy and part of Malaysia’s domestic policy framework that should not be compromised. A news report from Malaysiakini highlights the Prime Minister’s assertion that such policies are a matter of national sovereignty and remain protected in Malaysia’s external engagement.

*Expanding the scope of Affirmative Action policies*

Separately, the Kuala Lumpur Structure Plan 2040, included an objective to maintain a 40 per cent Malay and Bumiputera population in Kuala Lumpur. The report explains that this target is part of long-term planning considerations for the city and is intended to guide future development and population distribution up to the year 2040.

The above incidents are considered problematic because they explicitly centre race as a governing criterion in policy, planning, and state decision-making, resulting in differential treatment between citizens based on ethnic identity rather than neutral or needs-based considerations.

In the first two incidents, Bumiputera policies are presented as non-negotiable and beyond review, reinforcing race-based distinctions in access to economic and social opportunities. By affirming that such policies must remain intact regardless of external scrutiny, the state normalises the continued use of ethnicity as a determining factor in governance. This entrenches unequal treatment between Bumiputera and non-Bumiputera groups and limits space for reassessment of whether such policies disproportionately disadvantage certain communities.

In the third incident, the inclusion of a fixed racial demographic target in urban planning embeds race directly into development policy. By aiming to maintain a specific ethnic composition in Kuala Lumpur, governance decisions related to housing, land use, and population distribution risk being shaped by racial considerations rather than objective planning needs. This institutionalises race as a criterion for belonging in urban spaces and may indirectly exclude or disadvantage non-Bumiputera populations.

Taken together, these incidents reflect structural racism, where racial categories are formally incorporated into policy and governance frameworks. Even without hostile intent, such approaches sustain unequal outcomes and legitimise racial differentiation as a normal and acceptable basis for state action. Furthermore, the spirit of Malaysia as a multiracial nation is undermined when policies erode the principles that hold our diverse society together.

### **Recommendations**

- Malaysia should transition from race-based affirmative action policies to a comprehensive National Equal Opportunity Policy that ensures fairness and equal access for all citizens, regardless of ethnic background.
- Scholarships, financial aid, and business grants should be allocated based on socioeconomic need, so that assistance reaches individuals and communities that are genuinely economically disadvantaged.
- A clear and transparent assessment mechanism should be introduced for all social assistance programmes, ensuring that recipients are selected based on financial circumstances rather than racial identity.
- Interethnic mentorship initiatives should be developed to nurture successful entrepreneurs, professionals, and academics across all communities, thereby strengthening social cohesion and shared prosperity.
- The government should expedite the reintroduction of the Harmony Commission and related legislative measures to address racial discrimination, racism, and religious tensions through a structured, rights-based framework.
- Government administrative and enforcement agencies should refrain from engaging in moral policing and instead focus on addressing the legitimate purpose of citizens' presence at any premises.

## 2.2 Religious Discrimination

Racism and religious discrimination in Malaysia are closely intertwined with the country's multi-ethnic and multi-religious composition, where ethnicity and religion often overlap. Public discourse involving race and religion is particularly sensitive due to historical factors, constitutional arrangements, and political mobilisation along communal lines.

In previous iterations of the report, issues of religious discrimination were categorised by sector—namely, instances arising within politics, business, education, and other spheres. However, upon further deliberation, this report adopts a more focused approach by examining religious discrimination as a standalone category. This shift reflects the growing recognition that religious-based discrimination in Malaysia has developed distinct patterns, trends, and implications that cut across multiple sectors and cannot be adequately captured through a purely sectoral lens. By treating it separately, the report is better able to analyse its specific drivers, document emerging forms, and propose more targeted and effective policy responses.

To explain the distinction in greater depth, racial issues commonly arise in relation to affirmative policies favouring Bumiputera communities, access to education, employment, and perceived unequal treatment before the law. While these policies are constitutionally entrenched, public debate around them can at times fuel resentment or exclusionary narratives affecting non-Bumiputera groups.

Religious rhetoric frequently manifests through moral policing, public condemnation, or attempts to impose religious norms beyond their intended community. Incidents include public backlash against interfaith engagement, scrutiny of personal conduct during religious periods, restrictions on cultural or artistic expression, and controversies involving religious preachers or public figures. Such episodes can create fear, stigmatise minorities, and normalise assumptions based on appearance or perceived religious identity.

The politicisation of race and religion has amplified these tensions. Political actors and influencers sometimes frame issues through racial or religious lenses to mobilise support, which can legitimise exclusionary rhetoric. Social media further accelerates the spread of inflammatory narratives, often outpacing regulatory or corrective responses.

Whilst Malaysia maintains legal mechanisms to curb incitement, including laws addressing hate speech and the “3R” (race, religion, royalty), concerns persist about inconsistent enforcement, selective prosecution, and the chilling effect on legitimate discussion, which can undermine public confidence and exacerbate communal mistrust.

Date	Incident
19/03/2025	<b>A man was charged after slapping a non-Muslim youth for eating in public during Ramadan</b> when Abdul Razak allegedly confronted a 21-year-old man at a convenience store in a shopping mall, demanded to see his

	identity card to verify he was not Muslim, and then slapped him. He was charged under Section 323 of the Penal Code for voluntarily causing hurt. <sup>25</sup>
23/03/2025	<b>Non-Muslim Sabahan man in Kuala Lumpur keeps his IC on the table while dining during Ramadan after being mistaken as Muslim.</b> After Mr Omjai said he was previously confronted while eating in public and was almost taken away by authorities in a white van. <sup>26</sup>
10/05/2025	<b>Interfaith leader said fears and insecurities were restricting Muslim participation in inter-religious activities</b> when Persatuan Harmoni Malaysia vice-president Amir commented on the public uproar following PAS Semenyih assemblyman Nushi Mahfodz’s visit to the Arulmigu Dewi Sri Karumariamman Alayam temple on April 6. <sup>27</sup>
22/07/2025	<b>Selective protection offered under 3R rule, with preachers Zamri Vinoth and Firdaus Wong still free.</b> MIC criticised the lack of charges brought by the AGC against said figures, claiming that it is not a legal tool to defend the sanctity of only one religion. <sup>28</sup>
22/08/2025	<b>MyBurgerLab dismissed its COO after backlash over a social media post on Shariah punishment</b> after former Chief Operating Officer, Andrew Chong’s personal post drew public anger, particularly among Muslims. The company stressed that the post criticising a Shariah punishment in Terengganu did not reflect its principles. <sup>29</sup>
18/10/2025	<b>Firdaus Wong’s conversion video advising minors to convert to Islam without parental knowledge was found to violate non-Muslim parents’ constitutional rights</b> after the High Court ruled that eight parents could proceed with legal action over the breach of their rights under Article 12(4). <sup>30</sup>
16/11/2025	<b>UTM arts guidelines imposed alleged restrictions on dress, gender mixing and “foreign culture” in performances</b> including requirements to observe <i>aurat</i> (parts of the body that must be covered under Islamic

<sup>25</sup> Azri Azizan. “Pak Cik Pleads Not Guilty to Slapping a 21yo Man, Asks for Lower Bail As He “Has Children to Support” *World of Buzz*. March 19, 2025. <https://worldofbuzz.com/pak-cik-pleads-not-guilty-to-slapping-a-21yo-man-asks-for-lower-bail-as-he-has-children-to-support/>

<sup>26</sup> Azri Azizan. “Non-Muslim Man in KL Keeps IC on Table While Dining Out During Ramadan Due to Previous Bad Experiences” *World of Buzz*. March 23, 2025. <https://worldofbuzz.com/non-muslim-man-in-kl-keeps-ic-on-table-while-dining-out-during-ramadan-due-to-previous-bad-experiences/>

<sup>27</sup> Predeep Nambiar. “Fears, insecurities restricting inter-religious activity among Muslims, says interfaith leader” *Free Malaysia Today*. April 12, 2025. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/04/12/fears-insecurities-restricting-inter-religious-activity-among-muslims-says-interfaith-leader>

<sup>28</sup> “3R rule not to protect only one faith, MIC chief berates AGC” *Malaysiakini*. July 22, 2025 <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/749798>

<sup>29</sup> “MyBurgerLab sacks COO after outcry over Shariah punishment post, staff to undertake cultural sensitivity training” *Malay Mail*. August 22, 2025. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/08/22/myburgerlab-sacks-coo-after-outcry-over-shariah-punishment-post-staff-to-undertake-cultural-sensitivity-training/188546>

<sup>30</sup> V. Amalan. “Parents can sue preacher Firdaus over constitutional rights breaches, rules court” *Free Malaysia Today*. August 12, 2025. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/10/18/parents-can-sue-preacher-firdaus-over-constitutional-rights-breaches-rules-court>

	modesty rules), avoid mixed-gender performances, limit female performances to female audiences, and exclude <i>budaya luar</i> (foreign cultural elements). The university later issued a clarification. <sup>31</sup>
18/11/2025	<b>Islamic authorities scrutinised a Dolla music video over attire, leading to its removal.</b> Minister in the Prime Minister’s Department (Religious Affairs) Na’im Mokhtar said the video would be reviewed and could fall under syariah provisions, targeting the only Muslim member of the music trio, Sabronzo. Religious critics also publicly condemned it as immoral. <sup>32</sup>
19/12/2025	<b>Melaka religious authorities’ Christmas decoration restriction at halal-certified premises was justified under JAKIM halal certification guidelines</b> after a JAIM letter circulated stating that religious decorations were not allowed in halal-certified hotel kitchens and main restaurant spaces, with Melaka Exco Datuk Rahmad Mariman saying the rule was meant to preserve halal certification integrity and avoid confusion among customers. <sup>33</sup>
28/12/2025	<b>Actor Pekin Ibrahim was condemned online for joining an alleged Christmas celebration after a video of him in a Santa Claus outfit went viral</b> although the event was later described as a birthday party and not a Secret Santa gathering. <sup>34</sup>

### Fearmongering

In one reported case in 2025, Amir Farid Isahak, Chairman, Interfaith Spiritual Fellowship and Vice-President of Persatuan Harmoni Malaysia stated that visits by Muslim politicians to non-Muslim places of worship frequently provoke public backlash due to entrenched fears and insecurities within segments of the Muslim community. His comments followed public criticism of PAS Semenyih assemblyman Nushi Mahfodz’s visit to the Arulmigu Dewi Sri Karumariamman Alayam temple on 6 April 2025. Amir highlighted that such reactions reflect long-standing sensitivities surrounding interfaith engagement rather than isolated incidents.

When individuals go unchecked, they purport statements that are unwarranted and oftentimes goes beyond the rule of law. This is evident when Firdaus Wong posted a video

<sup>31</sup> Iyia Marsha Iskandar. “UTM clarifies ‘foreign culture’ in arts policy after photo goes viral” *New Straits Times*. November 16, 2025. [https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/11/1316201/utm-clarifies-foreign-culture-arts-policy-after-photo-goes-viral#google\\_vignette](https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/11/1316201/utm-clarifies-foreign-culture-arts-policy-after-photo-goes-viral#google_vignette)

<sup>32</sup> “Malaysian girl group Dolla’s ‘immoral’ video pulled over religious backlash” *CNA Lifestyle*. November 18, 2025. <https://cnalifestyle.channelnewsasia.com/entertainment/dolla-music-video-pulled-over-backlash-474086>

<sup>33</sup> Norafiza Jafar. “Larangan dekorasi Krismas tertakluk garis panduan pensijilan halal JAKIM” *Sinar Harian*. December 19, 2025. <https://www.sinarharian.com.my/article/761167/edisi/melaka-ns/larangan-dekorasi-krismas-tertakluk-garis-panduan-pensijilan-halal-jakim>

<sup>34</sup> Azri Azizan. “It was a birthday party” – Malaysian Actor Wearing Christmas Outfit Accused of Joining Secret Santa Event” *World of Buzz*. December 28, 2025. <https://worldofbuzz.com/it-was-a-birthday-party-malaysian-actor-wearing-christmas-outfit-accused-of-joining-secret-santa-event/>

advising on how minors could convert to Islam without informing their parents. The court, however, found that this undermined Article 12(4) of the Federal Constitution, which vests parents with the authority to decide the religion of minors.

### *Cultural insensitivities*

On the contrary, when individuals disregard sensitivities regarding religion, they will inadvertently learn that it bears consequences. This is apparent when local burger chain MyBurgerLab apologised following public backlash over a personal social media post by its former COO, Andrew Chong, which criticised a Shariah punishment implemented in Terengganu. The post caused anger and disappointment, particularly among Muslims. The company clarified that the post did not reflect its values of respect, unity, and inclusivity, terminated Andrew Chong's employment, and announced cultural sensitivity training for staff.

Religious policing in Malaysia is often observed to intensify during festive periods, particularly during Ramadan. Heightened public sensitivity surrounding religious observance during the fasting month frequently results in increased scrutiny of dress, behaviour, and dining practices in public spaces. Enforcement actions by religious authorities, as well as informal social monitoring by members of the public, tend to become more pronounced during this period.

### *Religious & moral policing*

In one incident, Malaysian girl group Dolla withdrew its latest music video following backlash from religious groups and criticism from a government minister, who alleged that the performers' attire was overly suggestive. The episode took place against the backdrop of heightened moral scrutiny directed at women in Malaysia's entertainment industry.

In a separate case reported by WORLD OF BUZZ, it described how a non-Muslim man in Kuala Lumpur felt compelled to place his identity card visibly on the table while dining during Ramadan to avoid confrontation, citing prior negative experiences. The incident underscores broader concerns regarding both formal and informal forms of religious policing that appear to be more visible and actively enforced during festive religious seasons. Separately, a 65-year-old man was charged in the Johor Bahru Magistrate's Court with voluntarily causing hurt to the younger man, who was eating at a convenience store during Ramadan, the Muslim fasting month. Authorities alleged the slap occurred after the older man confronted the youth about eating in public while fasting and demanded to see his identity card.

Pusat KOMAS also noted that there were incidents of religious policing attributed to authorities who act beyond their jurisdiction. In a reported incident, Jabatan Agama Islam Melaka (JAIM) circulated a letter banning Christmas decorations in Halal certified premises. This action from JAIM is particularly troubling as there are various restaurants some of which

are owned by non-Muslims that are Halal certified. A blanket prohibition to decorate their premises in accordance with festive celebrations, in this instance, Christmas, is an overt act of discrimination.

In November 2025, a policy circular from UTM's Culture and Arts Policy spread widely on social media and drew strong criticism from members of the public, academics, and artists. The circular contained guidelines on cultural and arts performances on campus — including restrictions on mixed-gender performances, requirements for modest dress and behaviour, and a clause referring to “foreign cultural groups” needing approval from the Vice-Chancellor to perform. Critics argued that some parts of these rules were unclear, morally prescriptive, and potentially exclusionary, especially in a multicultural context like Malaysia's. In their response, the university stressed that this clause was about ensuring that artistic activities are grounded in “values and local identity” and upheld with modesty, etiquette, and mutual respect. UTM additionally reiterated that it supports unity and diversity among its campus community and welcomes artistic expression as long as it aligns with those principles.

### **Recommendations**

- Safe and inclusive spaces should be established to encourage open dialogue, cultural exchange, and meaningful opportunities to address misconceptions between different communities.
- Youth-focused programmes should be intentionally designed to be multi-ethnic, enabling young Malaysians to better appreciate and reconnect with the country's diverse and multicultural identity.
- The national curriculum should be revised to provide a more comprehensive and accurate account of Malaysia's history, recognising the contributions of all ethnic groups in nation-building.
- Government departments, agencies, and enforcement bodies should be required to undergo racial sensitivity and anti-discrimination training to enhance professionalism, empathy, and respect in the delivery of public services.

## 2.3 Xenophobia

Xenophobia in Malaysia generally manifests as negative attitudes, discrimination, or fear directed toward foreigners, migrant workers, refugees, and stateless persons. While Malaysia relies heavily on foreign labour particularly in construction, manufacturing, plantations, and domestic work, migrants are often portrayed as economic, security, or public health threats, especially during periods of economic stress or crisis.

Public sentiment toward foreigners is shaped by structural and legal factors. Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention, leaving refugees and asylum seekers without formal legal status. As a result, they are frequently treated as undocumented migrants, which reinforces vulnerability, exploitation, and social exclusion. Media narratives and political rhetoric can intensify these perceptions by linking migrants to crime, disease, or social disorder.

Xenophobia also intersects with race and religion. Migrants and refugees who are visibly different in ethnicity, language, or religious practice such as Rohingya refugees or South Asian and African migrants often face heightened hostility. Online harassment calls for deportation, and public resistance to migrant communities are recurring features of this discourse.

Enforcement driven approaches, including raids and detention operations, further entrench fear and mistrust between migrant communities and authorities. While these measures are framed as immigration control, they can normalise suspicion toward foreigners in everyday social settings.

Date	Incident
12/03/2025	<b>Xenophobic comments about Bangladeshi worshippers after Masjid Damansara Perdana went viral for its design</b> when some netizens and congregants said they felt uncomfortable seeing many Bangladeshi men at the mosque during iftar, while others criticised the remarks as racist and reminded them that the mosque is open to all Muslims. <sup>35</sup>
13/03/2025	<b>Xenophobic caricature of foreign workers resurfaced on Instagram after a 2024 branded video was reposted and gained wider reach</b> when content creator The Iman Ali’s earlier SENZ Malaysia promotional video mocking foreign workers, especially South Asian and undocumented migrants, was reposted by WANCHAI FANS ONLY on 13 March 2025. The video used exaggerated raid-related scenes, accents and cultural stereotypes, and reportedly drew many comments encouraging the caricaturisation of foreign workers. <sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Dito. “Rakyat Malaysia Resah Masjid ‘Aesthetic’ Ini Dibanjiri Warga Asing” *Vocket*. March 12, 2025. <https://thevocket.com/netizen-mengeluh-masjid-ini-dibanjiri-bangladesh/>

<sup>36</sup>@lolpovfans. “Reel” Accessed March 5, 2025. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DHGo8-MyQb5/?igsh=MXI1dWthMWxwMjBydG==>

10/03/2025	<b>UK–Kenyan influencer Ray Mwiti alleged racially biased treatment by apartment security guards during check-in</b> after guards reportedly questioned him repeatedly about the validity of his booking and whether he was “sure” he was at the right location, while his wife and children waited. After he located the unit keys, the guards allegedly requested his passport and additional details, and he said they did not apologise. <sup>37</sup>
12/11/2025	<b>Sabahan singer Azharina Azhar called for the removal of undocumented migrants from Sabah and linked them to social problems</b> when she said that, if appointed minister, her priority would be to eliminate the presence of illegal immigrants whom she blamed for damaging Sabah’s image. <sup>38</sup>
9/12/2025	<b>Calls for harsher punishment against undocumented migrants were made by a political analyst</b> when UKM law professor Dr Salawati Mat Basir said Malaysia should firmly implement caning against undocumented migrants (PATI) who break the law, despite objections or pressure from external parties. <sup>39</sup>

In a reported incident, Azharina Azhar stated publicly that if she were to become a minister, her primary focus would be to eradicate the presence of illegal immigrants in Sabah. She attributed various social issues—such as crime, disorder, and reputational harm to the state to undocumented migrants. Her remarks were framed within broader dissatisfaction over long-standing governance problems in Sabah, including poor infrastructure, unreliable water and electricity supply, and weak political leadership.

While positioning herself as advocating for Sabahans’ welfare, her comments used strong and sweeping language that conflated structural governance failures with the presence of migrants. The framing portrayed undocumented migrants as a central cause of societal decline rather than as part of a complex policy and enforcement issue, reinforcing exclusionary narratives toward foreign communities in Sabah.

Separately, after Masjid Damansara Perdana gained attention on social media for its architecture and aesthetic appeal, the mosque attracted many visitors, including foreign Muslim men, particularly from Bangladesh. Online discussions among Malaysian Muslims expressed dissatisfaction with the presence of these foreign worshippers, with some commenters suggesting that other mosques were better at discouraging or “shooing away” such visitors.

<sup>37</sup> Qistina Nadia Dzulqarnain. “UK family's M'sian holiday tarnished by racist encounter at apartment” *Malaysiakini*. March 10, 2025. <https://m.malaysiakini.com/news/736828>

<sup>38</sup> Hiburan. “Jika jadi menteri, saya basmi pendatang asing di Sabah - Azharina Azhar” *Utusan Malaysia*. March 25, 2025. <https://www.utusan.com.my/nasional/2025/11/jika-jadi-menteri-saya-basmi-pendatang-asing-di-sabah-azharina-azhar/>

<sup>39</sup> Nurul Hidayah Bahaudin. “Laksana hukuman rotan PATI demi kedaulatan” *Harian Metro*. March 25, 2025. <https://www.hmetro.com.my/mutakhir/2025/12/1297742/laksana-hukuman-rotan-pati-demi-kedaulatan>

The discourse framed foreign Muslims as overcrowding the space or being undesirable, despite mosques traditionally being open places of worship. These complaints reflected discomfort not with non-Muslims, but with foreign Muslims, revealing how nationality and race can override shared religious identity. The reaction highlighted exclusionary attitudes within religious spaces and suggested an implicit hierarchy of belonging based on nationality and ethnicity.

### Ignorance

Satire or comedy, when executed thoughtfully, can engage audiences and provoke reflection. However, when poorly handled, it can instead leave a distasteful and harmful impression. In a video posted on Instagram, a group of influencers produced a skit modelled after a popular series from a mainstream media channel, purporting to “expose” the living conditions of migrants.

The concern with this video lies in its reinforcement of existing stereotypes about migrant workers in Malaysia. The skit depicts “migrants” as being indifferent to public hygiene, while the exaggerated accents employed serve to mock and ridicule a particular group of migrants. Regrettably, this portrayal underscores a broader pattern of unequal treatment, where migrants from developing countries are subjected to ridicule and dehumanisation, in stark contrast to expatriates, who are generally portrayed and treated with greater respect and acceptance.

Education is often regarded as a means of cultivating informed, critical, and compassionate individuals. Against this backdrop, Pusat KOMAS expresses deep concern over remarks made by a lecturer from a Malaysian public university who called for undocumented migrants to be subjected to caning under the guise of safeguarding national sovereignty. It must be recognised that the issue of undocumented migration is not unique to Malaysia. Conversely, there are Malaysians who have entered other countries irregularly in search of better livelihood opportunities. Were a foreign country to propose caning Malaysian nationals under similar circumstances, such conduct would undoubtedly be condemned as degrading and inhumane. The fact that such punitive measures are directed at others, rather than ourselves, does not make them any more acceptable or justifiable.

In another incident captured in the 2025 report, a UK-based influencer family alleged that they experienced racial discrimination while checking into their accommodation in Malaysia. According to Ray Mwit, security guards questioned his legitimacy as a guest, doubted his booking and payment, and treated him in a condescending and disrespectful manner. He described being spoken to “*like a child*” and feeling humiliated and emotionally distressed during the interaction.

Only after he located his booking details did the guards allow access, at which point they requested his passport. No apology was offered. Mwit expressed that the incident made him feel unwelcome and questioned whether he wanted to remain in the country if such treatment reflected broader societal attitudes.

The incident raised concerns about racial profiling, particularly toward black foreigners, and how authority figures may exercise discretion differently based on appearance, nationality, or race.

### **Recommendations**

- Elected representatives, community leaders, schools, and the private sector should be encouraged to organise more educational programmes addressing discrimination faced by migrants, refugees, stateless individuals, and undocumented persons. Pusat KOMAS's *Bangsa Malaysia Workshops* already highlight the discrimination experienced across various segments of society and can serve as a strong model for such initiatives.
- Employment policies should incorporate clear frameworks that prohibit discrimination against migrant workers and ensure fair and equitable treatment in the workplace.
- Public awareness should be enhanced through social media and other platforms to improve understanding of the definitions and distinctions between migrants, stateless individuals, and undocumented persons.
- Clear and enforceable non-discrimination policies should be adopted across all essential services and public-facing institutions—including, but not limited to, healthcare, education, housing, and public administration—to ensure that all individuals receive safe, dignified, and equitable access to services.

## 2.4 Racial Politics

Racial politics has been a defining feature of Malaysia's political development since independence in 1957, rooted in structures established during British colonial rule. Colonial economic policies segmented society along ethnic lines, with Malays largely engaged in rural agriculture, Chinese communities dominant in commerce and mining, and Indians concentrated in plantation labour. These divisions fostered socio-economic disparities and communal political mobilisation. At independence, Malaysia adopted a power-sharing model through the Alliance Party, reflecting a constitutional compromise that granted citizenship to non-Malays while recognising the special position of Malays and Bumiputera under Article 153 of the Federal Constitution.

The May 13, 1969 racial riots marked a turning point in Malaysia's racial politics, prompting a significant shift in state policy. In response to ethnic tensions and economic inequalities, the government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1971, aimed at poverty eradication and restructuring society to reduce the identification of race with economic function. While the NEP contributed to the growth of a Malay middle class and reduced overall poverty, it also institutionalised race-based affirmative action, shaping political discourse and inter-ethnic relations for decades.

Although the NEP formally ended in 1990<sup>40</sup>, its underlying principles continued under subsequent national development policies. Ethnic considerations remained central to governance, with political parties often mobilising support along racial and religious lines. The Reformasi movement in 1998 and the historic 2018 general election signalled attempts to shift political competition toward governance, accountability, and multiracial platforms. However, debates over Malay privileges, Islam's role in the state, vernacular education, and equality continued to reflect enduring ethnic sensitivities.

In recent years, racial politics has remained a salient feature of Malaysia's political landscape, influenced by coalition instability, identity-based rhetoric, and the amplification of public discourse through social media. While there are ongoing efforts to promote national unity and needs-based policies, race and religion continue to shape electoral strategies, public policy, and parliamentary debate. The trajectory of racial politics in Malaysia demonstrates both the challenges of managing diversity in a plural society and the persistent influence of historical constitutional and socio-economic arrangements.

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<sup>40</sup> Lee Hwok Aun. "The New Economic Policy: Revisiting origins and misconceptions" *Economic History Malaysia*. Accessed March 6, 2025. <https://www.ehm.my/publications/articles/the-new-economic-policy-revisiting-origins-and-misconceptions>

Date	Incident
02/05/2025	<b>Datuk Dr Akmal Saleh said UMNO would not compromise on Islam, Malay rights, and the monarchy in a 3R-themed statement</b> when he posted that UMNO “has never been rhetorical” on royalty, race and religion (3R), in response to criticism from Urimai president Professor Dr. P. Ramasamy that UMNO’s “narrow ethno-religious agenda” has sidelined BN allies MCA and MIC and eroded minority support. <sup>41</sup>
20/06/2025	<b>Professor Dr. P. Ramasamy defended ethnically focused politics after PSM declined to join an opposition coalition citing discomfort with ethnic rhetoric</b> when he said it was unfair to claim coalition parties were “focused solely on ethnic issues,” arguing that Malay-based parties may emphasise ethnic hegemony while Indian-based parties may highlight ethnic marginalisation, and that the issue depends on what aspects of ethnicity are raised. <sup>42</sup>
19/07/2025	<b>PAS Pahang Deputy Commissioner, Andansura Rabu, framed UMNO-DAP cooperation as a threat to Malay-Muslim political dominance in Pahang</b> as he accused UMNO of betraying the state by governing with DAP, claimed DAP was gaining influence through appointments in local councils and committees, and urged voters to “return” political power to Malays and Muslims through PAS/Perikatan Nasional in PRU16. <sup>43</sup>
17/10/2025	<b>Singapore’s Ministry of Home Affairs criticised PAS for race- and religion-based comments about Singapore’s 2025 general election</b> after PAS praised a Malay-Muslim candidate and criticised Malay-Muslim MPs from the ruling PAP, with Singapore warning that the remarks crossed into foreign interference by stoking racial and religious sentiments. <sup>44</sup>
18/10/2025	<b>PAS Pengkalan Chepa MP invoked the Palestine–Israel analogy to warn against non-Malays “taking over” Malay land and rights in Malaysia</b> when, during a public talk marking PAS Kelantan’s 70th anniversary, he said Malaya’s independence required accepting jus soli citizenship for “workers brought in” from China and India, and framed this as similar to Palestinians initially “welcoming” Jewish migrants before losing control of

<sup>41</sup> “Umno Youth chief: ‘We don’t care’ if defending Islam, Malay rights drives away your support” *Malay Mail*. May 2, 2025. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/05/02/we-dont-care-if-defending-islam-malay-rights-drives-away-your-support-says-umnos-akmal-saleh/175335>

<sup>42</sup> “Focus on race not ‘inherently problematic’, Ramasamy tells PSM chairman” *Free Malaysia Today*. August 20, 2025 [https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/08/20/focus-on-race-not-inherently-problematic-ramasamy-tells-psm-chairman?fbclid=PAQ0xDSwMSa9FleHRuA2FibQIxMQABp0bdPsdWHmoMG0ujypsmkpr5pS63sdJthBOEDqZ4YAYTODFNVsrKdVuRdjYS\\_aem\\_y0KTwcD3KeTTkaLRRVmz7Q](https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/08/20/focus-on-race-not-inherently-problematic-ramasamy-tells-psm-chairman?fbclid=PAQ0xDSwMSa9FleHRuA2FibQIxMQABp0bdPsdWHmoMG0ujypsmkpr5pS63sdJthBOEDqZ4YAYTODFNVsrKdVuRdjYS_aem_y0KTwcD3KeTTkaLRRVmz7Q)

<sup>43</sup> N. S. Ramli. “Kuasa Politik di Pahang Perlu Dikembalikan Pada Orang Melayu Islam”. *Malaysiakini*. July 19, 2025. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/749485>

<sup>44</sup> “MHA’s Response to PAS’s 15 Oct 2025 Statement” *Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs*. October 16, 2025. <https://www.mha.gov.sg/media-room/newsroom/mha-response-to-pas-15-oct-2025-statement/>

	land and country. He argued that Malays must not allow a similar outcome to occur in Malaysia, and further claimed that DAP's push for "kesamarataan" (equality) and a "secular" Malaysia was intended to threaten Bumiputera rights protected under the Federal Constitution. <sup>45</sup>
21/11/2025	<b>Pro-PN Facebook pages targeted DAP MP Syerleena Abdul Rashid with defamatory and religiously charged attacks after she lodged police reports over TikTok allegations</b> when Gerakan Anti-PH (GAM) and Warisan Plus posted a video insulting her as "Balaci* DAP" and mocked critics of GISB Holdings using religious language and insinuations of divine punishment. <sup>46</sup>
13/12/2025	<b>Speakers at a "Melayu 153" convention pushed for stronger constitutional entrenchment of Malay-Bumiputera privileges and Malay-Muslim political leadership</b> when Rais Yatim urged Article 153 be strengthened and better understood, while Noh Omar proposed amending the Constitution so only a Malay-Muslim can be Prime Minister, calling for Malay political unity to defend "sovereignty" and special position provisions. <sup>47 48</sup>
17/12/2025	<b>Federal Territories appointments were racialised by PAS and Umno Youth leaders who claimed "same-race" leadership created imbalance and Malay unease</b> when PAS secretary-general Takiyuddin Hassan criticised Hannah Yeoh and Lo Su Fui's appointments as placing a key portfolio under leaders "from the same race," and Pemuda Umno Wilayah Persekutuan's Aliff Firdaus Abd. Hadi warned the appointments had caused concern among urban Malays and urged the leaders not to sideline Malay interests. <sup>49 50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Malaysianometry. "Ceramah Umum PAS Pengkalan Chepa - 18 Oktober 2025" *Youtube*. Accessed March 3, 2025. Time - 47:26 - 48:24 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-9Z5nZJhqEg>

<sup>46</sup> Muhamad Abdullah. "Gerakan Anti PH (GAM) & Warisan Plus" *Facebook*. Accessed March 24, 2025. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1482874785147899/posts/24422375167437869/>

\*A derogatory term meaning blind follower

<sup>47</sup> Luqman Hakim. "Rais urges strengthening of Article 153 to safeguard Malay and Bumiputera rights" *New Straits Times*. December 13, 2025.

<https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/12/1336137/rais-urges-strengthening-article-153-safeguard-malay-and-bumiputera>

<sup>48</sup> "Make PM Post for Malay Muslims Only - Noh Omar" *Free Malaysia Today*. December 13, 2025. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/12/13/make-pms-post-for-malay-muslim-only-says-noh-omar>

<sup>49</sup> "PAS Plays Racial Card over FT Ministry Picks, UMNO Urges Govt to Explain" *Malaysiakini*. December 17, 2025. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/763613>

<sup>50</sup> Khuzairi Ismail. "Menteri WP Didominasi Satu Kaum Timbul Kegusaran Orang Melayu - Aliff Firdaus". *Malaysia Gazette*. December 16, 2025. [https://malaysiagazette.com/2025/12/16/menteri-wp-didominasi-satu-kaum-timbul-kegusaran-orang-melayu-aliff-firdaus/?fbclid=IwdGRjcAOuydVleHRuA2FlbQlxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZAwzNTA2ODU1MzE3MjgAAR4UVVxmVDp4aHyGI\\_njBkgdrYBjf3B-BDPhlSsmVGr36MB-hyieAHWumk2WVsA\\_aem\\_GhGIOPDkrThTgz8d23Kf1Q](https://malaysiagazette.com/2025/12/16/menteri-wp-didominasi-satu-kaum-timbul-kegusaran-orang-melayu-aliff-firdaus/?fbclid=IwdGRjcAOuydVleHRuA2FlbQlxMQBzcnRjBmFwcF9pZAwzNTA2ODU1MzE3MjgAAR4UVVxmVDp4aHyGI_njBkgdrYBjf3B-BDPhlSsmVGr36MB-hyieAHWumk2WVsA_aem_GhGIOPDkrThTgz8d23Kf1Q)

*Fearmongering*

In 2025, Pusat KOMAS has flagged 7 cases wherein it is attributable to racial politics. In December 2025, PAS secretary-general Takiyuddin Hassan criticised Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim's cabinet reshuffle, particularly the appointments of Hannah Yeoh as Minister and Lo Su Fui as Deputy Minister in the Federal Territories portfolio. Takiyuddin argued that placing both positions under leaders from the same ethnic background created what he described as an "imbalance" in the administration of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya, and Labuan. He characterised these territories as politically strategic and economically significant, suggesting that such appointments risked over-centralisation of influence within one political party, particularly the DAP. He further alleged that the reshuffle reflected political bargaining rather than merit-based considerations, linking it to DAP's broader policy objectives such as advocacy for Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) recognition.

On a separate occasion whilst still harping on the same issue, UMNO Youth Federal Territories chief Datuk Aliff Firdaus Abd. Hadi expressed concern that the appointments had generated unease among segments of the Malay community in urban areas. He framed the issue as one of racial representation and balance, noting that it was unprecedented for both ministerial positions in the portfolio to be held by individuals from the same race. While urging the new leadership to administer the territories fairly, he emphasised the need to safeguard Malay interests, highlighting how cabinet appointments can become focal points for ethnic political narratives.

Pusat KOMAS have also found that there still exist individuals, including politicians who have selectively nit-picked the provisions of the Federal Constitution for their own political leverage and mileage. One example would be where Tan Sri Rais Yatim called for a renewed understanding and strengthening of Article 153 of the Federal Constitution, which safeguards the special position of Malays and Bumiputera. Speaking at a convention centred on Malay rights, Rais described Article 153 as a foundational element of Malaysia's constitutional settlement, rooted in pre-independence agreements. He argued that ongoing debates questioning affirmative action policies demonstrate the need to reinforce constitutional literacy and ensure that protections for Malays and Bumiputera are preserved amid political and social change.

*Racism for political leverage*

At the same event, Noh Omar proposed amending the Federal Constitution to require that only a Malay-Muslim may hold the office of Prime Minister. He argued that such a provision was implicitly intended but not explicitly codified during constitutional drafting. Drawing a comparison to state-level constitutional provisions, such as the Selangor requirement that the Menteri Besar be Malay-Muslim, Noh contended that formalising such a requirement at the federal level would safeguard national sovereignty and reflect Malaysia's demographic and historical foundations. The proposal sparked debate about constitutional equality, democratic principles, and the evolving interpretation of Malaysia's founding social contract.

Further, despite repeated calls from civil societies and elected leaders to be pragmatic in politics, Pusat KOMAS through this report identified certain individuals who have a pre-meditated mindset to be “*champions of their own kind*” and therefore have urged for leaders to be elected within racial lines. One example would be when Urimai chairman P. Ramasamy argued that focusing on ethnic issues is not inherently problematic. He contended that Malay-based parties may legitimately address concerns about ethnic hegemony, while Indian-based parties may highlight marginalisation faced by their communities. According to Ramasamy, the legitimacy of ethnic discourse depends on the substance and objectives of the issues raised rather than the mere fact that ethnicity is discussed. This exchange reflects broader tensions in Malaysian politics over whether race-based advocacy reinforces division or serves as necessary representation within a plural society.

## **2.5 Incitement Towards Hate**

Racial incitement in Malaysia refers to speech, conduct, or political mobilisation that promotes hostility, suspicion, or discrimination between ethnic or religious groups. While Malaysia has largely maintained social stability since the 1969 racial riots, episodes of racially charged rhetoric continue to surface in political campaigns, public discourse, and online platforms.

Historically, racial incitement has often emerged during periods of political contestation. The May 13, 1969 riots remain the most serious example, triggered by heightened communal tensions following a closely fought general election. Since then, the state has taken a regulatory approach, criminalising speech deemed seditious or likely to cause public disorder. Laws such as the Sedition Act 1948, the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998, and provisions under the Penal Code are frequently invoked to address speech that incites racial or religious hostility. However, enforcement has sometimes been criticised as selective or politically influenced.

In Malaysia today, racial incitement often manifests through political rhetoric that frames governance issues in ethnic or religious terms. Debates over affirmative action, Article 153 of the Federal Constitution, vernacular education, the role of Islam, and minority rights are sometimes presented in ways that suggest existential threats to particular communities. Political actors may invoke race or religion to consolidate support, particularly during elections. Social media has amplified such narratives, allowing inflammatory statements to circulate rapidly and intensifying polarisation.

Online platforms have become a significant arena for racial and religious provocation. Anonymous or partisan users may post derogatory remarks, conspiracy claims, or allegations framed around communal identity. These incidents can escalate quickly, prompting police reports, public backlash, or government intervention. The blurring of lines between political criticism and religious insult further complicates enforcement, especially when public figures are involved.

At the same time, civil society organisations, interfaith groups, and segments of the political class advocate for moderation and inclusive discourse. National unity campaigns and educational initiatives seek to promote mutual understanding. Nevertheless, racial incitement remains a sensitive issue because it intersects with constitutionally protected special positions, democratic freedoms, and Malaysia's historical experiences of communal conflict.

Date	Incident
19/03/2025	<p><b>Relocation of a 130-year-old Hindu temple in central Kuala Lumpur drew controversy amid plans for a ‘Masjid Madani’ project on the site</b> after reports said the Dewi Sri Pathrakaliyamman temple sits on land previously sold to a private company now linked to a proposal to build a new mosque expected to be launched by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. While the temple committee reportedly agreed to relocate nearby, Hindu advocates raised concerns over heritage protection and temple land security, and the issue sparked wider public debate on fairness in managing religious sites.<sup>51</sup></p>
02/05/2025	<p><b>Tun Dr Mahathir warned against Malaysia being “taken over” by non-Malays and questioned non-Malays’ belonging despite citizenship</b> when he said it was unacceptable for Malay youth to accept the idea of other “races” controlling Malaysia, and claimed non-Malays with Malaysian nationality had not embraced being Malaysian and remained tied to their countries of origin.<sup>52</sup></p>

Racial division through fearmongering

Pusat KOMAS have found there are 2 cases that are classified under this theme. Former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad stated that it is unacceptable for Malay youths to allow the possibility of Malaysia being “controlled” or “taken over” by non-Malays. He argued that non-Malays, despite holding Malaysian citizenship, have not fully embraced a Malaysian national identity and continue to maintain cultural or emotional ties to their countries of origin. His remarks framed political and demographic change as a threat to Malay dominance, reinforcing long-standing narratives of ethnic insecurity and raising concerns about the exclusionary definition of national belonging.

Improper method to address religious based tension

In another unrelated event, a 130-year-old Hindu temple in central Kuala Lumpur became the subject of public controversy following plans to relocate it to facilitate the construction of a new Masjid Madani, which is expected to be launched by Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim. The land on which the temple sits was previously sold to a private company, and the temple committee has reportedly agreed to relocate to a nearby site. However, Hindu groups and civil society advocates expressed concern that the relocation threatens cultural heritage,

<sup>51</sup> “Kuil lebih seabad di tengah KL berdepan ancaman roboh di sebalik cadangan ‘Masjid Madani’?” *Malaysia Now*. March 19, 2025.

<https://www.malaysianow.com/my/news/2025/03/19/kuil-lebih-seabad-di-tengah-kl-berdepan-ancaman-roboh-di-sebalik-cadangan-masjid-madani>

<sup>52</sup> Muhammad Azizul Osman. “Tun M Tidak Boleh Terima Anak Melayu Izin Bangsa Lain Kuasai Malaysia” *Malaysian Gazette*. May 2, 2025. [https://malaysiagazette.com/2025/05/02/tun-m-tak-boleh-terima-anak-melayu-izin-bangsa-lain-kuasai-malaysia/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR4ruLkmZr1mHPPhqGRi797LPwMf3EcxnEzjdXLI4TPMk4TtO9wLo45SmN-XbQ\\_aem\\_qu6Gq5N4mnZ0ysV55DivHQ](https://malaysiagazette.com/2025/05/02/tun-m-tak-boleh-terima-anak-melayu-izin-bangsa-lain-kuasai-malaysia/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR4ruLkmZr1mHPPhqGRi797LPwMf3EcxnEzjdXLI4TPMk4TtO9wLo45SmN-XbQ_aem_qu6Gq5N4mnZ0ysV55DivHQ)

religious continuity, and highlights long-standing vulnerabilities surrounding temple land ownership.

The incident sparked broader public debate, with some critics accusing authorities of granting preferential treatment to Islamic projects, while others defended the relocation as lawful and consensual. The case has since been framed as emblematic of structural inequalities in the protection of religious spaces, particularly affecting minority communities.

### **Recommendation**

- The National Harmony Commission should be re-established as an independent body empowered to receive complaints relating to racial discrimination, racism, racial slurs, and incitement. Its mandate should include investigating complaints, facilitating mediation, promoting reconciliation, and providing accurate advice to the government, while prioritising restorative approaches rather than relying solely on punitive legal measures.
- Authorities and national enforcement bodies must act with fairness, integrity, and impartiality, ensuring that enforcement is neither biased nor selectively applied. The consistent and equitable application of the law is essential to maintaining public trust and strengthening social cohesion.
- Political parties should articulate visions and missions that promote a Malaysia beyond racial and religious divisions, while preserving and strengthening the nation's rich multicultural and multireligious identity.

## **2.6 Prejudice & Provocation**

Prejudice in Malaysia cannot be understood outside the country's unique model of managing diversity. Malaysia has relied on a power-sharing political structure and constitutionally recognised ethnic distinctions to maintain stability. This framework has shaped not only governance and public policy but also social perceptions between communities. Consequently, prejudice in Malaysia has developed within a system that simultaneously promotes harmony and formalises difference, producing patterns that have evolved significantly over time.

Socially, prejudice in earlier Malaysia tended to be implicit and normalised rather than confrontational. Ethnic segregation was reflected in schooling systems, housing patterns, and social networks, reinforcing communal boundaries without necessarily producing overt hostility. Public expressions of racism were generally discouraged, and racial sensitivities were treated as taboo topics. As a result, while prejudicial attitudes existed at the interpersonal level, they were rarely articulated openly or challenged directly within mainstream discourse.

From the early 2000s onwards, prejudice in Malaysia began to shift in form rather than substance. The expansion of the internet, social media, and alternative news platforms significantly reduced information gatekeeping and enabled wider public participation in political and social debate. Prejudice that had once been embedded in policy and practice increasingly surfaced in rhetoric, narratives, and identity-based mobilisation. Racial and religious issues became central tools in political competition, with parties such as UMNO, PAS, and DAP frequently accused by opponents or supporters of advancing sectarian interests.

In contemporary Malaysia, prejudice is more visible and emotionally charged, often amplified through online platforms. Political rhetoric increasingly frames minority communities or reformist agendas as threats to Malay rights, Islam, or national identity. Religious prejudice has become more pronounced than in earlier decades, with heightened scrutiny of religious practices, conversions, and moral conduct. Islam has increasingly functioned not only as a faith but as a political identity marker, intensifying divisions between Muslims and non-Muslims and, at times, within the Muslim community itself.

A key distinction between earlier and modern prejudice lies in its mode of expression. Whereas past prejudice was largely institutional and implicit, contemporary prejudice is discursive, explicit, and performative. Statements that would previously have been considered socially unacceptable are now frequently voiced in public forums, justified as free speech or political critique. At the same time, there is stronger resistance to prejudice today, with civil society organisations, independent media, and segments of the public actively contesting racist and exclusionary narratives.

Date	Incident
04/03/2025	<b>ERA FM DJs sparked backlash after mocking Thaipusam customs</b> in a video posted on official social media when the presenters mimicked and joked about Hindu rituals, before the posts were taken down and apologies were issued following public criticism. <sup>53</sup>
05/03/2025	<b>Preacher Zamri Vinoth compared Hindus chanting “vel vel” to people who are possessed or intoxicated</b> when he made the remark shortly after the ERA FM controversy, prompting criticism that the statement demeaned Hindu religious practice. <sup>54</sup>
03/04/2025	<b>X post by @Malaysia_Problm criticised Indonesian leaders with xenophobic language after claims about Joko Widodo praying for the late Pope</b> at a funeral when an account reposted a screenshot and called Indonesians “weirdos,” portraying the act as “stupid”. <sup>55</sup>
15/04/2025	<b>UiTM students drew backlash after being photographed wearing Ku Klux Klan-style robes</b> when images circulated on social media showing the group dressed in KKK-like attire, prompting public criticism over racist symbolism. <sup>56</sup>
26/05/2025	<b>Negarawati Tanahair condemned Lim Guan Eng’s proposal to allocate 10% of Bumiputera special allocation to non-Bumiputeras</b> when its president Bibi Sunita Sakandar Khan claimed the suggestion undermined the “social contract” and affirmative action policies. <sup>57 58</sup>
10/06/2025	<b>Racist insults were directed at the Transport Minister following criticism of his response to a fatal student bus incident</b> after online comments targeted the minister with racialised remarks amid public anger over the case. <sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Adeline Leong. “[Watch] Era FM DeeJays Apologise After Slammed For Mocking Hindus” *The Rakyat Post*. March 4, 2025. <https://www.therakyatpost.com/news/2025/03/04/watch-era-fm-deejays-apologise-after-slammed-for-mocking-hindus/>

<sup>54</sup> “Chanting “vel vel” akin to intoxicated or possessed individuals, says controversial preacher Zamri Vinoth” *The Vibes*. March 5, 2025. <https://www.thevibes.com/articles/news/105553/chanting-vel-vel-akin-to-intoxicated-or-possessed-individuals-says-controversial-preacher-zamri-vinoth>

<sup>55</sup> Hersubeno Point. “Heboh! Netizen Malaysia Tertawakan Jokowi Baca Al-Fatihah Di Depan Jenazah Paus” *Youtube*. Accessed March 23, 2025. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C92GoQQccNk>

<sup>56</sup> Shahril Bahrom. “Outrage Erupts As UiTM Dengkil Students Allegedly Don KKK Robes For “Social Project”” *The Rakyat Post*. April 15, 2025. <https://www.therakyatpost.com/news/2025/04/15/outrage-erupts-as-uitm-dengkil-students-allegedly-don-kkk-robres-for-social-project/>

<sup>57</sup> “Hak Istimewa Bumiputera Cuba Diruntuhkan” *Harakah Daily*. May 26, 2025. <https://harakahdaily.net/2025/05/hak-istimewa-bumiputera-cuba-diruntuhkan/>

<sup>58</sup> “Lim Guan Eng : Non-Bumiputera Getting RM 345 Million But RM 12 Billion Is Allocated To The Bumiputera” *The Coverage*. March 3, 2025. <https://www.thecoverage.my/7816/lim-guan-eng-non-bumiputera-getting-rm-345-million-but-rm-12-billion-is-allocated-to-the-bumiputera>

<sup>59</sup> “Anthony Loke trolled with call to resign, racist slur after 2nd major heavy vehicle fatality in a month” *Focus Malaysia*. June 10, 2025. <https://focusmalaysia.my/anthony-loke-trolled-with-call-to-resign-racist-slur-after-2nd-major-heavy-vehicle-fatality-in-a-month/>

24/06/2025	<b>Toraise @ Turesh Kumar Munusamy posted a Facebook comment calling Orang Asli MP Ramli Nor “s*kai” and mocking his intelligence</b> in a remark that later led to legal action, with the Tapah Magistrates’ Court fining him RM1,300 after he pleaded guilty to the insulting post. <sup>60</sup> <sup>61</sup>
25/06/2025	<b>PAS leader Zaharuddin Muhammad was criticised for a Facebook post implying a future Chinese prime minister through foreign lineage</b> after he used Lieutenant General Johnny Lim’s promotion as the basis for a fictional scenario, where a Chinese prime minister emerges via foreign-born lineage. He claims the screenshot of Lim’s promotion, attached to the hypothetical narrative on Facebook, was “merely decorative.” <sup>62</sup>
23/07/2025	<b>TikTok creator Taufiq Iskandar repeatedly used “s*kai” as an insult and demeaned Orang Asli while verbally attacking others</b> when he said a man had the “brain of a s*kai,” claimed “s*kais don’t go to school,” and continued using the slur while directing gendered insults at a woman. <sup>63</sup>
11/08/2025	<b>UMNO Youth Chief Datuk Dr Akmal Saleh threatened protest and “education” action over an upside-down Jalur Gemilang incident</b> involving a Chinese hardware store owner when he urged prosecutors to charge Feng Jin Zhen within two days and called for heavier punishment, prompting criticism from Lawyers for Liberty that the threats were bullying and racially divisive. <sup>64</sup>
14/08/2025	<b>Che GuBard in a Facebook post framed senior appointments of Johnny Lim and M. Kumar as evidence of a “Malaysian Malaysia” narrative</b> when the writer linked Lieutenant General Johnny Lim’s promotion and Datuk M. Kumar’s appointment as CID Director to political messaging about national identity and representation. <sup>65</sup>
31/08/2025	<b>False claims and racial slurs circulated online after a woman approached the Sultan of Perak, with posts alleging she was a “Chinese attacker”</b> when WhatsApp messages and social media posts accused Chinese Malaysians of staging an incident and used derogatory terms, before Dr Rozaimi Ramle condemned the racist reaction and clarified the woman was Malay and had a medical condition. <sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> “Aktivis gesa tindakan ke atas pengguna Facebook hina timbalan speaker ‘sakai’” *Malaysiakini*. June 24, 2025. <https://m.malaysiakini.com/news/747089>

<sup>61</sup> Predeep Nambiar. “Man fined RM1,300 for using slur against Orang Asli MP Ramli” *Free Malaysia Today*. July 31, 2025. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/07/31/man-fined-rm1300-for-using-slur-against-orang-asli-mp-ramli>

<sup>62</sup> “Hadi’s son-in-law paints racist dystopia on news of first Chinese lieutenant general” *Malaysiakini*. June 25, 2025. <https://m.malaysiakini.com/news/747138>

<sup>63</sup> <https://vt.tiktok.com/ZSBoKhg57/>

<sup>64</sup> “Flag Blunder: Akhmal Threatens Protest If No Charges by Wednesday” *Malaysiakini*. August 11, 2025. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/751923>

<sup>65</sup> Renushara. “PN Activist Says Datuk M Kumar’s Appointment as PDRM CID Chief Will Lead to Non-Malay PM in the Future” *World of Buzz*. August 14, 2025. <https://worldofbuzz.com/political-activist-points-out-that-non-malays-in-positions-of-power-can-lead-to-non-malay-pm/>

<sup>66</sup> “MCMC Hauls Up 3 More Over False Racial Posts On Sultan Nazrin Case” *Malaysiakini*. September 4, 2025. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/754197>

16/10/2025	<b>Parit MP called for action over an alumni reunion at St Michael's Institution, Ipoh, alleging alcohol was served on school premises</b> when he urged investigation and incorrectly cited multiple religious teachings in condemning alcohol use. <sup>67</sup>
23/10/2025	<b>Tun Dr Mahathir claimed Malay political power was weakening under Anwar's leadership due to DAP's influence in government</b> when he argued that the predominantly non-Malay party was shaping national direction and undermining Malay dominance despite no relevant constitutional or policy changes. <sup>68</sup>
03/11/2025	<b>MP Datuk Ahmad Amzad Mohamed criticized the proposed US-Malaysia trade agreement (ART) as undermining the Bumiputera economic policy by removing ethnic preferences for GLCs, framing Bumiputera privilege protection as safeguarding national sovereignty.</b> <sup>69</sup>
15/12/2025	<b>Tan Sri Haji Hadi Awang criticized the Pakatan Harapan unity government's "imported from the West" reforms, alleging they cause moral and social decline,</b> saying that Western-style policies undermine traditional values and local needs, suggesting Malaysia needs culturally and religiously rooted policies instead.
15/12/2025	<b>Datuk Dr. Akmal Saleh's Instagram post, responding to MIC Youth's criticism of Zahid Hamidi, used racially suggestive language ("dei machaa," "mabuk todi") to mock MIC's perceived political inconsistency by implying MIC leaders displayed "real drunkenness" when publicly considering leaving BN to cooperate with Perikatan Nasional (PN) while simultaneously supporting the Prime Minister (PMX).</b>

In the 2025 Malaysia Racism Report, the theme of prejudice recorded the highest number of tabulated cases replacing racial politics from its predecessor report. In one incident, Pertubuhan Negerawati Tanahair, led by Bibi Sunita Sakandar Khan, condemned a proposal attributed to Lim Guan Eng to reallocate a portion of Bumiputera specific funds to non-Bumiputeras. The organisation framed the proposal as an attack on the social contract and long-standing affirmative action policies. Separately, despite being agents of disseminating information through radio broadcast, DJs from ERA FM's "3 Pagi Era" show found themselves in the limelight when they mocked Hindu customs related to Thaipusam in a video posted online. The group of radio announcers later posted an apology video featuring them in Batu Caves.

### Religious policing

<sup>67</sup> Mhamad Ismi Taib Original. "Kenyataan Media Ahli Parlimen Parit - Isu Hidangan Arak Di Dalam Premis Sekolah". Facebook. Accessed March 23, 2025. [https://www.facebook.com/muhammadismitaiboriginal/posts/4224766764447772?ref=embed\\_post](https://www.facebook.com/muhammadismitaiboriginal/posts/4224766764447772?ref=embed_post)

<sup>68</sup> Dawn Chan. "Dr M: Malays 'losing power' under Anwar's rule due to DAP" *New Straits Times*. October 23, 2025. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/10/1300546/dr-m-malays-losing-power-under-anwars-rule-due-dap>

<sup>69</sup> Khuzairi Ismail. "ART: Jangan korbankan kedaulatan negara, dasar bumiputera – Ahmad Amzad" *Malaysia Gazette*. November 3, 2025. <https://malaysiagazette.com/2025/11/03/art-jangan-korbankan-kedaulatan-negara-dasar-bumiputera-ahmad-amzad/>

Throughout the years, we hear incidents of little Napoleons religious policing either of their own kind or of another. A 65-year-old man, Abdul Razak, took a step too far as he confronted and slapped a non-Muslim man for eating in public during Ramadan and demanded proof of religion. He was charged under Section 323 of the Penal Code.

*Racism for political mileage*

Akmal Saleh was featured twice in under this category as he posted an Instagram caption responding to MIC Youth criticism using racially suggestive terms such as “*dei machaa*” and “*mabuk todi*,” drawing accusations of stereotyping the Indian community. Not only were his comments distasteful, but it is also disappointing knowing that he had abused the stature he has by disseminating negative messages. He also threatened protests over an upside-down Jalur Gemilang incident involving a Chinese hardware store owner, prompting criticism for vigilantism and racial intimidation

Another political actor who has been seen taking probate and reprobate positions is Tun Dr Mahathir. Despite once helming the Pakatan Harapan government, he has now claimed that Malays were losing political power under Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim due to DAP influence, despite no constitutional changes. In a separate incident caught in our exploratory report, Tun Mahathir lodged a police report against the prime minister over the same trade deal, amid racialised claims it would undermine Bumiputera rights.

*Ignorance*

Further, as Malaysia progress more into nurturing a civilised society, we are held back by certain individuals who still remain obstinate. In one incident, a Facebook comment directed at Deputy Speaker Ramli Nor used derogatory language “*sakai*” referencing Orang Asli stereotypes, prompting calls for action to reprimand such a behaviour.

We have also found that certain political leaders have abused their position in spreading misinformation and raising nuances for their political mileage. In a reported incident, PN activist Badrul Hisham Shaharin warned that appointments of non-Malay officials could lead to a non-Malay prime minister, reinforcing ethnic anxieties. Badrul has, however, failed to show the exact legislation in Malaysia which prohibits the appointment of a non-Malay Prime Minister and this remains to be a baseless fearmongering tactic employed by politicians for their own gain.

**Recommendation**

- National level discussions should be re-kindled, building on the NUCC's initial recommendations
- To develop a comprehensive Hate Speech Framework that addresses incitement, racial hostility, and discriminatory rhetoric in a structured, rights-based manner.
- The public should actively call out and hold accountable political parties or individuals who exploit racial sentiments for electoral gain, reinforcing the principle that race-based manipulation has no place in Malaysia's democratic process.
- Programmes that enhance public understanding of the Federal Constitution should be expanded, emphasising the rights and protections afforded to all Malaysians and fostering greater respect for constitutional principles.

### 3 RACISM IN PARLIAMENT

Racism in Parliament generally refers to the expression, reinforcement, or institutionalisation of racial or ethnic distinctions through parliamentary speech, conduct, or policymaking. This can occur both explicitly, through racially charged statements and derogatory remarks by legislators, and implicitly, through laws, practices, or political narratives that privilege or disadvantage particular racial or ethnic groups.

This is the second year where KOMAS' Malaysia Racism Report sifts through and scrutinises debates in the Dewan Rakyat, where racial and religious discourse still (unfortunately) occurs. It is to be noted here that the racism report does not just criticise actions by our elected representatives, but also acknowledges actions that affirm and reject racial and/or religious rhetoric (*Refer to Efforts/Commendable Acts*).

Historically, parliamentary racism often has roots in colonial governance structures, where race was used as an organising principle for administration, representation, and access to resources. These colonial legacies influenced post-independence political systems, embedding race into electoral politics, public policy, and national identity formation.

In Malaysia, race has been a central feature of parliamentary discourse since independence. The Federal Constitution recognises the “*special position*” of Malays and Bumiputera under Article 153, while also guaranteeing equality before the law under Article 8. This constitutional framework has resulted in race-based policies being debated, defended, and contested within Parliament. Over time, parliamentary debates have sometimes crossed from policy-based discussions into racially polarising rhetoric, particularly during periods of heightened political competition.

Globally, similar patterns can be observed in other multi-ethnic societies, where parliamentary racism reflects broader societal tensions. As a result, many legislatures have introduced standing orders, codes of conduct, and anti-hate speech rules to curb racially inflammatory language, recognising Parliament's role in setting norms for public discourse.

### 3.1 Racial Majoritarianism and Article 153 Politics

Date	Person(s) Involved	Incidents
05/02/2025	Dato' Azman Nasrudin [Padang Serai]	Claimed Article 153 of the Federal Constitutions as "Malay Bumiputera Rights". <sup>70</sup>
06/02/2025	Datuk Idris Ahmad [Bagan Serai]	Said that non-Bumiputera and non-Malays should be thankful to get Malaysia nationality because of tolerance by the Malays, and must never question Malay rights. <sup>71</sup>
12/02/2025	Dr Abd Ghani Ahmad [Jerlun]	Claimed Article 153 of the Federal Constitution grants "rights" to Bumiputera, hence priority must be given to Bumiputera for any programme and allocation. <sup>72</sup>
18/02/2025	Datuk Dr Ahmad Marzuk Shaary [Pengkalan Chepa]	Following the racist incident by a corn-seller in Sepang, a question of Anti-Racial Discrimination Act was floated to curb racist attitudes. In response, Datuk Dr Marzuk responded that such an act would challenge the social contract, the Federal Constitution, and Bumiputera 'rights', controversially warning that pushing it could trigger racial tensions and a repeat of the May 13 tragedy. <sup>73</sup>
30/07/2025	Wan Ahmad Fayshal [Machang]	Suggested under the Energy Commission Bill to include provision on a quota of at least 30% to only Bumiputera companies for energy export through open tender process. <sup>74</sup>
04/08/2025	Datuk Haji Awang bin Hashim [Pendang]	Claimed that in Malaysia Plan 13, there is no specific development plan for Bumiputera community, relating it with the development of the Chinese New Village, saying that the action of the current government can bring toward racial distress that happened on May 13, 1969. <sup>75</sup>
04/08/2025	Haji Ahmad Fadhli Shaari [Pasir Mas]	Claimed that the Malaysia Plan 13 is disregarding the "rights" of Bumiputera aligned with the spirit of Article 153 of the Federal Constitution and condemning the government for slowly moving away from the essence of the New Economic Plan. <sup>76</sup>
04/08/	Mohd Nazri	Claimed that the core agenda of Malaysia Plan which is

<sup>70</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 1st Sitting, February 5, 2025, 104

<sup>71</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 1st Sitting, February 6, 2025, 68-69

<sup>72</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 1st Sitting, February 12, 2025, 61

<sup>73</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 1st Sitting, February 18, 2025, 102

<sup>74</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, July 30, 2025, 75

<sup>75</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 4, 2025, 56

<sup>76</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 4, 2025, 85

2025	[Merbok]	Bumiputera empowerment as the majority are being disregarded in the 13th version, relating it with the core of the National Economic Policy. <sup>77</sup>
04/08/2025	Hajah Salamiah [Temerloh]	Claimed that one apparent weakness of the 13th Malaysia Plan is there is no special focus on Bumiputera community's equity holding, cited that this fails to empower Bumiputera economic standing aligned with the National Economic Policy. Bumiputera empowerment plans are general, with no affirmative policy or additional quota which make the community stays as consumers and workers, not owners and investors. <sup>78</sup>
07/08/2025	Tan Sri Dato' Haji Mahiaddin Yassin [Pagoh]	Contradict himself by highlighting the need to insert a bolder affirmative action for Bumiputera community (as his argument was the lack of such initiative in RMK13), followed by calling upon helping people regardless of their race in the same sentence. <sup>79</sup> He also criticised MADANI government decision to move from race-based to need-based approach.
11/08/2025	Kalam bin Salan [Sabak Bernam]	Demand the 'rights' of Bumiputera in RMK13, claiming Bumiputera are begging on their own land. <sup>80</sup>
12/08/2025	Datuk Seri Takiyuddin [Kota Bharu]	In his speech, he mentioned the lack of Bumiputera agenda in RMK13, and then he related the issue with a misleading statement that has racial sentiments: he mentioned there is allocation for Chinese New Village but none for Indian communities working in estates. <sup>81</sup>
12/08/2025	Datuk Haji Awang Hashim [Pendang]	Accused Jelutong MP, YB Rayer was involved in the 13th May incident. <sup>82</sup>
21/08/2025	Dato' Seri Dr Shahidan Kassim [Arau]	Said that the usage of "New Village" and "Indian" words in RMK13 is as a yardstick for the plan, claimed that the it is only fair if the word "Bumiputera" is used as well, and if there is no "Bumiputera" in RMK13, then should pull allocation for the New Village and aid for the Indians. <sup>83</sup>
15/10/2025	Dr. Haji Abd Ghani bin	In the budget debate, Jerlun argued that Malay political power was being eroded, that Malays as Muslims were being divided,

<sup>77</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 4, 2025, 101

<sup>78</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 4, 2025, 117

<sup>79</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 7, 2025, 53

<sup>80</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 11, 2025, 135-136

<sup>81</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 12, 2025, 50-54

<sup>82</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 12, 2025, 43

<sup>83</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 21, 2025, 117-118

	Ahmad [Jerlun]	and that land, property and business were falling into the hands of foreigners or non-Malays. <sup>84</sup>
15/10/2025	Dr. Haji Abd Ghani bin Ahmad [Jerlun]	Jerlun claims Malay political power is eroding and that land, property and business are falling into the hands of foreigners or non-Malays. <sup>85</sup>
23/10/2025	Datuk Haji Awang bin Hashim [Pendang]	Pendang says Malaysia has lived peacefully in a multi-ethnic setting until “DAP became part of the current government” then adds that DAP “stirred racial provocation” and later refers to “ <i>hak dominan</i> ” and “63% of Muslims in the country.” Opposition MPs objected that the remarks were hurtful, divisive and offensive. <sup>86</sup>
20/11/2025	Dato’ Seri Dr. Shahidan bin Kassim [Arau]	Arau argued that visitors come to see a distinctly Malaysian city and that urban development should therefore be based on demographic composition. He then linked that principle directly to preserving and enforcing Bumiputera rights in housing ownership. <sup>87</sup>

The statements by Dato’ Azman Nasrudin (Padang Serai), Datuk Idris Ahmad (Bagan Serai), Dr Abd Ghani Ahmad (Jerlun), and Datuk Dr Ahmad Marzuk Shaary (Pengkalan Chepa) reflect a consistent framing of Article 153 of the Federal Constitution as conferring entrenched “rights” upon Bumiputera, often accompanied by assertions regarding the limits of public discourse on the issue.

While Article 153 does provide for the special position of the Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak, its characterisation as absolute or exclusive “rights” can be contentious, particularly where it is invoked to justify broad policy preferences or to discourage legitimate discussion. Statements suggesting that non-Bumiputera communities should remain unquestioning or “grateful,” or that policy reforms such as a proposed anti-discrimination framework would undermine the constitutional order, may be perceived as narrowing the space for inclusive dialogue.

The allegation by Datuk Haji Awang Hashim, Member of Parliament for Pendang, that RSN Rayer (Jelutong) was involved in the May 13 incident is particularly serious in nature. Such a claim, even if made without due care or recklessly, appears illogical. A basic search by the Pusat KOMAS team indicates that RSN Rayer was born in 1971, which would mean the allegation attributes involvement in an incident that occurred prior to his birth.

Notwithstanding this, statements of this nature may still resonate with segments of the public who do not verify information, thereby risking the distortion of historical facts. This is

<sup>84</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, October 15, 2025.171

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>86</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, October 23, 2025, 78

<sup>87</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, November 20, 2025, 76-77

particularly concerning given the sensitivity of the May 13 incident. Attributing involvement in such a significant and traumatic event to a contemporary political figure may be perceived as inflammatory, as it introduces a personal allegation into an already delicate historical context.

The remarks by Dr. Haji Abd Ghani, Member of Parliament for Jerlun, reflects a longstanding concern in Malaysian political discourse regarding the perceived erosion of Malay political and economic influence. He claimed that land, property, and business opportunities are increasingly controlled by non-Malays or foreigners, framing these developments as a threat to the community's historical socio-economic standing. While such statements may resonate with segments of the population, they risk reinforcing ethnic stereotypes and overstating communal divides.

### 3.2 Religious Rhetoric and Fearmongering

Date	Person(s) Involved	Incidents
26/02/2026	Dato Seri Shahidan Pendang, Datuk Haji Awang Hashim [Arau]	Pendang MP labelled DAP being an “anti-Islam” party while hiding behind the law after heated discussion with warnings issuing against non-Muslims interfering in Islamic Affairs concerning JAKIM’s guidelines prohibiting Muslims from participating in non-Muslim religious rituals during cultural festivals. Then Arau MP denied Jelutong MP’s claim as “pembela Islam” in his constituency. <sup>88</sup>
11/08/2025	Datuk Dr Ahmad Marzuk [Pengkalan Chepa]	Inquired about RM20 million given to non-Bumiputera companies for Tabung Haji <b>branding</b> , questioning the fact that it is not owned and led by non-Bumiputera and non-Muslim. <sup>89</sup>
13/08/2025	Datuk Haji Awang Hashim [Pendang]	Called Kampar MP, YB Chong Zhemine, a <i>kafir harbi</i> (non-Muslim that does not have any agreement with Muslim people and is openly against Islam). <sup>90</sup>
09/10/2025	Tuan Haji Wan Hassan bin Mohd Ramli [Dungun], Datuk Wira Hajah Mas Ermieyati binti Samsudin [Masjid Tanah]	<p>MPs raised controversy surrounding the Gala Dinner linked to “Global Travel Meet 2025” under MOTAC. The issue centred on allegations that alcohol was served at the dinner, and whether the event should be treated as an official government function because it had been approved within Tourism Malaysia and agreed to by the Minister, despite parts of the organisation being handed over to the private sector.</p> <p><b>Dungun</b> argued that once the event was approved by the Minister, it became a “majlis rasmi” and should have complied with government circular guidelines, and he urged that the matter should not recur and that an apology be made due to public impact. MOTAC Minister Dato’ Sri Tiong King Sing responded that the event had been handed over to the private sector and that there was confusion/miscommunication which he regretted; he rejected claims that the ministry intended to disrespect Islam and stressed that ministry events do not place alcohol on tables. The exchange continued with MPs questioning the minister’s explanation, including an objection that the minister was misleading the House, and another MP asking why alcohol was served when other beverages were</p>

<sup>88</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 1st Sitting, February 26, 2025, 76-77

<sup>89</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 11, 2025, 104

<sup>90</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 13, 2025, 88

		available. <sup>91</sup>
13/10/2025	Tuan Haji Mohd Hasnizan bin Harun [Hulu Selangor]	Hulu Selangor called for alcohol service on Malaysia Airlines to be stopped, arguing that Muslim cabin crew are compelled to serve something haram and that the issue concerns respect for religion and the sensitivities of the majority. <sup>92</sup>
15/10/2025	Tan Sri Dato' Seri Haji Abdul Hadi bin Awang [Marang]	In the budget debate, Marang stated that Islam respects the rights of non-Muslims to consume alcohol or pork and that such rights should not be disturbed. However, he argued that alcohol should not feature in state-related activities, tourism, or national representation, framing the issue around preserving the dignity of the country. <sup>93</sup>
27/10/2025	Tuan Haji Mohd Misbahul Munir bin Masduki [Parit Buntar]	<p>MPs clash over allegations that a Chinese school was linked to alcohol consumption, with one MP rejecting claims that schools were teaching students to drink and another arguing such events should not be held in schools because they create negative perceptions.<sup>94</sup></p> <p>Raub said it was irresponsible to twist the facts and accuse Chinese schools of teaching students to drink alcohol, clarifying that the issue concerned after-hours rental or use of school halls by the outside community and that only non-Muslim adults may legally consume alcohol. Parit Buntar replied that while non-Muslims' rights were respected, such events should not be held in schools because they were seen as inappropriate and could create harmful public perceptions.</p>
28/10/2025	<p>Tuan Chong Zhemim [Kampar]</p> <p>Tuan Haji Mohd Misbahul Munir bin Masduki [Parit Buntar]</p>	<p>Parliamentary quarrel erupts after an MP makes broad claims about how several religions view alcohol, prompting objections that Christianity and other faiths were being misrepresented.</p> <p>During debate on alcohol and public morality, Parit Buntar said several religions, including Buddhism, Sikhism, Hinduism and Christianity, do not encourage alcohol consumption. Kampar objected that Christianity does not prohibit drinking alcohol and treated the remarks as a misstatement of Christian teaching. Parit Buntar then insisted he said "<i>tidak menggalakkan</i>" (does not encourage), which he did, rather than an absolute prohibition, although his wording during the exchange also became broader and more categorical. The Chair later cautioned him against making claims about other religions and</p>

<sup>91</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, October 9, 2025, 13-17

<sup>92</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, October 13, 2025, 155

<sup>93</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, October 15, 2025, 55

<sup>94</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, October 27, 2025, 122-123

		told him to confine the point to Islam.
26/11/2025	Datuk Willie anak Mongin [Puncak Borneo]	Puncak Borneo said a Sarawak Bumiputera had allegedly been denied recognition as Bumiputera because he was not Muslim, and suggested printing Bumiputera status on the new card. He then added that religion could also be included, saying some Sabah and Sarawak people are mistaken for Malays and sometimes detained for eating during Ramadan. <sup>95</sup>

During the 2026 Budget debate, Pengkalan Chepa MP presented figures on socio-economic disparities affecting the Malay/Bumiputera community. He then drew what he described as *“lessons from Palestinian history”*, framing the Palestinian experience as a warning about the loss of land, economic dominance, and political power.

Pendang MP subsequently echoed this comparison, explicitly linking it to Article 153 of the Federal Constitution, arguing that constitutional protections for Malays and Bumiputera were necessary to prevent a similar erosion of majority rights.

Separately, during a parliamentary debate, the Pendang MP once again drew attention to himself when he referred to the May 13, 1969 racial riots, characterising the reference as a *“friendly reminder”* to Malaysians. He later defended his remarks publicly, stating that May 13 is part of the Form 5 history syllabus and discussing it should not be considered taboo.

In another segment of the 2026 Budget debate, Pengkalan Chepa again referenced Palestinian history while discussing socio-economic data. He framed the Palestinian experience as an analogy for economic displacement, drawing parallels between Zionist settlement and perceived shifts in economic control.

During the Parliamentary sessions, Pusat KOMAS cannot help but to notice that these fear mongering tactics are deployed during Parliamentary debates by a single opposition faction. It should be noted that Parliamentary debates are televised live for the masses to view. Whilst their intentions of raising these *“reminders”* remains questionable, it is very difficult to inadvertently draw conclusions that the statements uttered are fuelled with ulterior motives to advance their political mileage.

<sup>95</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, November 26, 2025, 126

### 3.3 Xenophobic Rhetoric

Date	Person(s) Involved	Incidents
13/02/2025	Datuk Seri Jalaluddin Alias [Jelebu]	Note that the presence of undocumented migrants and refugees has caused discomfort among locals, dominates the job markets, and drains national subsidies. <sup>96</sup>
21/07/2025	YB Khoo Poay Tiong [Kota Melaka]	YB Khoo said that because domestic waste collection in the industrial area had been stopped, the factory owners would ask foreign workers to dispose of the rubbish, but he said "as we know, if foreign workers don't see a bin, they will just throw the rubbish anywhere on their way back to their hostel" <sup>97</sup>
23/07/2025	YB Cha Kee Chin [Rasah]	Said Malaysians cannot buy subsidised oil because the cashier, who is a foreigner, refused to sell to them and only sell them to foreigners. <sup>98</sup>
24/07/2025	YB Khoo Poay Tiong [Rasah]	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Said that refugees are actually PATI, worried that if too many UNHCR cards are issued, it will be abused.<sup>99</sup></li> <li>2. Accused the Rohingya community that live in his constituency raised a lot of problems, locals are fleeing because of security issues i.e., when they fight they will burn other people's houses.<sup>100</sup></li> </ol>
28/07/2025	Tuan Haji Hasnizan [Hulu Selangor] & Dato' Sri Dr. Wee Jeck Seng [Tanjong Piai]	Said that the influx of foreign workers is bad, as they are everywhere in retail stores. <sup>101</sup>
05/08/2025	Datuk Seri Panglima Bung Mokhtar [Kinabatangan]	Mentioned that there is an influx of Chinese foreign workers in Telupid, making it seem like it's their town. <sup>102</sup>
06/08/2025	Bagan, Lim Guan Eng	Said because Malaysia is not tied to ILO's rules, employers do not need to pay foreign workers minimum wage rate of RM1,700 and 2% EPF contribution. <sup>103</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 1st Sitting, February 13, 2025, 113

<sup>97</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, July 21, 2025, 111

<sup>98</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, July 23, 2025, 70

<sup>99</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, July 24, 2025, 123

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid* 123-124

<sup>101</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, July 28, 5-6

<sup>102</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 5, 2025, 79

<sup>103</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 6, 2025, 46

27/08/2025	Tumpat, Dato' Hajah Mumtaz Md Nawi	Claimed there is no need to register the refugees because Malaysia is not signatories of the Refugee Convention. Said that refugees do not have rights and should not have the freedom of movement in the federation. <sup>104</sup>
07/10/2025	Dato' Mumtaz binti Md Nawi [Tumpat]	Parliamentary remarks associate undocumented migrants and migration with TB risk, raising concern over stigmatising public-health framing of migrant communities. <sup>105</sup>

The remarks made by Dato' Mumtaz in Parliament on 7th October 2025 is particularly distasteful when she linked undocumented migration and migrant communities with TB risk and missing vaccination records. While framed as a public-health concern, this type of discourse can contribute to stigma when migrants are treated primarily as vectors of disease. Further, her remarks further substantiate a recent Malaysian study on refugees and asylum seekers which note that migrant and refugee communities are frequently conflated with illegality, exposed to xenophobia, and blamed for disease spread, with serious consequences for healthcare access and social cohesion.

The remark made by Khoo Poay Tiong, Member of Parliament for Kota Melaka, attributing criminal or disorderly behaviour broadly to the Rohingya community such as claims of widespread social problems or security threats may be perceived as generalisations. While localised challenges may arise and warrant appropriate policy responses, framing them in collective terms risks reinforcing negative stereotypes and heightening tensions between communities. Khoo once again made a sweeping statement when he remarked on "foreign workers' waste disposal habits".

Separately, the remarks by Datuk Seri Jalaluddin Alias, Member of Parliament for Jelebu, reflect common public concerns relating to undocumented migrants and refugees, particularly in relation to employment competition and the allocation of public resources. While such issues are often raised in policy discussions, framing these groups as broadly "dominating" job markets or "draining" subsidies risks oversimplifying a complex socio-economic landscape and may contribute to negative perceptions if not supported by nuanced evidence.

<sup>104</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 27, 2025, 123

<sup>105</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, October 7, 2025, 61

### 3.4 Language and Exclusion

Date	Person(s) Involved	Incidents
04/02/2025	Dato' Rosol Wahid [Hulu Terengganu]	Felt disappointed to receive a Chinese New Year hamper with a greeting card written in Mandarin language, saying that they are in Hong Kong or China instead of Malaysia. <sup>106</sup>
26/02/2025	Dato' Rosol Wahid [Hulu Terengganu]	Questioning on how unity can be achieved if Chinese speak Mandarin, Indians speak Tamil and Malays speak Malay, disputing on languages used by BERNAMA in their reporting and arguing it should be only in Malay. <sup>107</sup>
06/08/2025	Dato' Rosol [Hulu Terengganu]	Chastising YB Kampar, Tuan Chong Zhemin, saying he did not speak the correct <sup>108</sup> Malay language.
07/08/2025	Dato' Rosol [Hulu Terengganu]	Mentioned that usage of language other than the national language to please the "others". <sup>109</sup>
18/08/2025	Dato' Rosol [Hulu Terengganu]	Chastising Kota Melaka MP, YB Khoo and Bangi MP, YB Syahredzan by saying they do not understand Malay language. <sup>110</sup>
27/08/2025	Muhammad Fawwaz [Permatang Pauh]	Suggested the customer services staff as frontliners to record 'Malay language frequency level' of their customers to lessen the negative sentiments and perceptions in multi-racial society. <sup>111</sup>

The series of remarks attributed to Dato' Rosol, Member of Parliament for Hulu Terengganu, reflects a recurring emphasis on the primacy of the Malay language in public and social life. While the promotion of a national language is a legitimate policy objective, several of the statements—such as expressing discomfort with Mandarin in a Chinese New Year greeting, questioning the role of multilingualism in unity, and criticising fellow MPs' language proficiency—may be perceived as dismissive of Malaysia's linguistic diversity.

Similarly, the suggestion by Muhammad Fawwaz, MP for Permatang Pauh, to monitor or record customers' "Malay language frequency level" raises concerns that conflating language use with national belonging, can contribute to feelings of exclusion among non-Malay-speaking communities and even within the Malay communities.

<sup>106</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 1st Sitting, February 4, 2025, 96

<sup>107</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 1st Sitting, February 26, 2025, 40

<sup>108</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 6, 2025, 38

<sup>109</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 7, 2025, 98

<sup>110</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 18, 2025, 62

<sup>111</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, August 27, 2025, 97

### 3.5 Weaponisation of Places of Worship

Date	Person(s) Involved	Incidents
31/07/2025	Dato' Sri Dr. Haji Ismail [Maran]	His questions in regards to maintenance of non-Muslim houses of worship have elements of prejudice when he mentioned that non-registered houses of worship are built at inappropriate places and can cause social problems. <sup>112</sup>

The remarks made by Member of Parliament for Maran, Dato' Sri Dr. Haji Ismail raises a nuanced concern within the broader discussion on the regulation and maintenance of non-Muslim houses of worship. While the issue of registration and compliance with the relevant planning laws is, on its face, an administrative and legal matter, the manner in which it is articulated carries broader social implications.

In particular, the suggestion that non-registered houses of worship are “built at inappropriate places” and may “cause social problems” can be perceived as embedding a generalised assumption about such spaces and the communities associated with them. Even if unintended, this framing risks conveying a degree of prejudice, as it appears to link non-compliance with negative social outcomes without properly distinguishing between isolated cases and the wider reality.

<sup>112</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 2nd Sitting, July 31, 2025, 17

### 3.6 Weaponisation of Palestine

Date	Person(s) Involved	Incidents
23/10/2025	Datuk Dr. Ahmad Marzuk bin Shaary [Pengkalan Chepa]	Pengkalan Chepa defends a Palestine analogy as a lesson about losing power and land, triggering objections that the comparison could stir hostility between communities and misleadingly cast non-Bumiputera/non-Muslims as akin to Zionist Israel. <sup>113</sup>

The incident that was recorded in the Hansard on 23rd October 2025 reflects a broader and sensitive challenge in public discourse: the invocation of complex international conflicts, such as the situation in Palestine, within domestic political narratives. In this instance, Datuk Dr. Ahmad Marzuk Shaary appears to have framed the Palestine analogy as a cautionary illustration about the consequences of losing political power and territorial control. From that perspective, such references may be intended to resonate emotionally and historically, drawing on widely recognised themes of dispossession and vulnerability. Analogies involving Israel and Palestine are deeply layered, and when transposed into Malaysia’s multicultural context, they risk being interpreted in ways that map external conflicts onto local communities. In particular, the suggestion that non-Bumiputera or non-Muslim groups could be implicitly likened to “Zionist Israel” introduces a framing that may inadvertently ascribe collective political or moral characteristics to diverse domestic groups. This can heighten sensitivities and, in some cases, contribute to misunderstanding or unease between communities.

#### Recommendation

- Parliament and all State Legislative Assemblies should adopt a Code of Ethics Against Hate Speech, as proposed in Pusat KOMAS’s policy paper, by expanding the existing Standing Orders—particularly Sections 23(2) and 36(4), (9), (10), and (12). This Code should clearly define the boundaries relating to racial slurs, the propagation or incitement of hate, expressions of disrespect toward persons of different races or religions, and the use of fear-mongering within legislative debates.

<sup>113</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, October 23, 2025,.75-77

## Efforts/Commendable Acts

Efforts to promote national harmony and unity in Malaysia must be assessed not only through rhetoric, but also through sustained and tangible action. While statements against emerging racial or religious conflict are always welcome, this section observes concrete steps undertaken by government officials, prominent public figures, the private sector, and members of the public at large to strengthen inter-communal trust and cohesion. In a plural society such as Malaysia, where ethnicity and religion remain deeply intertwined with social and political life, meaningful unity requires more than condemnations of hate speech — it requires consistent enforcement, community engagement, and institutional commitment.

At the policy level, the role of the Kementerian Perpaduan Negara (KPN) has been particularly significant. The Ministry has taken the position that there is presently no necessity to enact new legislation specifically to curb insults against race and religion.<sup>114</sup> Instead, it has emphasised the enforcement of existing laws and the strengthening of reform-based and community intervention approaches. As articulated by Datuk Aaron Ago Dagang (although it has been subject to comments over the years), the legal framework already includes statutes such as the Penal Code, the Communications and Multimedia Act, the Sedition Act, and the Printing Presses and Publications Act.

This stance reflects an institutional preference for balanced enforcement and preventive engagement, rather than reactionary law-making. By focusing on community-level intervention programmes, dialogue initiatives, and mediation mechanisms, the Ministry signals that sustainable unity is best cultivated through education and social reform, rather than solely through punitive measures.

Similarly, the leadership of the Prime Minister has featured repeated public affirmations rejecting racism and religious extremism. It has been observed that he made at least ten statements across various platforms condemning divisive rhetoric and calling for national unity. These pronouncements serve an important symbolic function: they reinforce constitutional principles of equality and send a clear message that extremist narratives are incompatible with Malaysia's multicultural foundations. For the purpose of this report, these ten instances refer to publicly reported statements made between March and December 2025

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<sup>114</sup> Sheera Abg Mansor, "Dewan Rakyat: Tiada Keperluan Gubal Akta Baharu, KPN Fokus Intervensi Komuniti" *TV Sarawak*. July 29, 2025. [https://www.tvsarawak.my/2025/07/29/dewan-rakyat-tiada-keperluan-gubal-akta-baharu-kpn-fokus-intervensi-komuniti/?fbclid=IwQ0xDSwL1VXVjbGNrAvVVMWV4dG4DYWVtAjExAAEeFhDNpY765feP3jVPFd5OjCfSotkBSryMEpD0sHWnoMky47JhSvmijdODMjw\\_aem\\_7oiwpUCzhtkFRSwzkc8qNg](https://www.tvsarawak.my/2025/07/29/dewan-rakyat-tiada-keperluan-gubal-akta-baharu-kpn-fokus-intervensi-komuniti/?fbclid=IwQ0xDSwL1VXVjbGNrAvVVMWV4dG4DYWVtAjExAAEeFhDNpY765feP3jVPFd5OjCfSotkBSryMEpD0sHWnoMky47JhSvmijdODMjw_aem_7oiwpUCzhtkFRSwzkc8qNg)

in relation to the misuse of religion in politics, racially charged narratives, extremist tendencies, and appeals for unity and social cohesion.<sup>115116117118119120121122123124</sup>

However, when policy is examined alongside rhetoric, the true measure of commitment lies in how inclusivity is translated into governance — through equitable economic policies, fair access to opportunities, and institutional reforms that avoid reinforcing ethnic polarisation. In this regard, unity-building efforts are most commendable when public messaging is aligned with transparent and inclusive policy implementation.

Beyond government actors, the private sector has also played a constructive role in fostering harmony. Many corporations have adopted diversity and inclusion policies, implemented multicultural workplace initiatives, and supported interfaith and intercultural corporate social responsibility programmes. By creating professional environments where individuals from different backgrounds collaborate and advance based on merit, businesses contribute to normalising diversity as a strength rather than a fault line. Such initiatives, while often understated, help cultivate everyday experiences of coexistence and mutual respect.

At the community level, civil society organisations, religious bodies, and ordinary citizens continue to organise interfaith dialogues, cultural exchange programmes, and solidarity campaigns in response to incidents that threaten communal harmony. Grassroots responses whether through public statements, social media advocacy, or peaceful gatherings promoting unity demonstrate that Malaysians across ethnic and religious lines remain committed to preserving social cohesion. These acts, though less visible than official pronouncements, reflect a shared societal understanding that harmony must be actively protected.

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<sup>115</sup> “PM Anwar issues warning: Don’t use religion as a political weapon” *Malay Mail*. March 7, 2025. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/03/07/pm-anwar-issues-warning-dont-use-religion-as-a-political-weapon/168889>

<sup>116</sup> R. Losheswar. “Anwar urges calm and unity, warns against racially charged narratives on social media” *Malay Mail*. April 7, 2025. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/04/07/anwar-urges-calm-and-unity-warns-against-racially-charged-narratives-on-social-media/172151>

<sup>117</sup> Arfa Yunus. “Anwar calls for united front against national security, unity threats, including bullying” *The Star*. August 15, 2025. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/08/15/anwar-calls-for-united-front-against-national-security-unity-threats-including-bullying>

<sup>118</sup> Zakiah Koya. “PM Anwar calls on religious leaders to unite against hatred at international summit” *The Star*. August 28, 2025. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/08/28/pm-anwar-calls-on-religious-leaders-to-unite-against-hatred-at-international-summit>

<sup>119</sup> “MMC Has Key Role In Advising Govt On Strengthening Media Freedom - PM Anwar”. *Bernama*. December 17, 2025. <https://www.bernama.com/en/general/news.php?id=2503983>

<sup>120</sup> “Any Claims on Languages Should Prioritise Bahasa Melayu as The National Language” *Bernama*. December 12, 2025. <https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2501834>

<sup>121</sup> Tarrance Tan & Teh Athira Yusoff. “Preserve our politics from right-wing ideologies, PM tells Malaysians” *The Star*. October 18, 2025. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/10/18/preserve-our-politics-from-right-wing-ideologies-pm-tells-malaysians>

<sup>122</sup> “PM Anwar warns against extremism, fanaticism to safeguard political, economical stability” *The Star*. September 16, 2025. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/09/16/pm-anwar-warns-against-extremism-fanaticism-to-safeguard-political-economical-stability>

<sup>123</sup> “Conflicts, Riots In Other Countries Must Serve As Lesson For All To Appreciate Nation's Peace, Unity - PM Anwar” *Bernama*. September 13, 2025. <https://bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2467201>

<sup>124</sup> Gerard Gimino & Martin Carvalho. “Reject those who try to divide the nation, says Anwar” *The Star*. August 30, 2025. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/08/30/reject-those-who-try-to-divide-the-nation-says-anwar>

Pusat KOMAS opines that promoting sustainable national harmony in Malaysia requires a coordinated, multi-layered approach that moves beyond reactive responses to racial or religious tensions. The question is not only what should be said during moments of controversy, but what structural, policy, and societal measures can be implemented consistently over time.

## Government & Politicians

Date	Effort
14/01/2025	<b>The usage of e-Sepakat system launched by the Unity Ministry will be widened across the nation starting from 2025</b> , to ensure everyone will have the ability to report or document any issue in regards to unity from grassroots level in a more efficient way. <sup>125</sup>
28/02/2025	<b>Establishment of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Racial and Religious Harmony (APPGM-RRH)</b> to advance dialogue and develop policy, legislative, and educational proposals on racial and religious harmony in Malaysia. <sup>126</sup>
19/06/2025	<b>The National Unity Ministry has introduced a new initiative, the National Public Community Complaints Network (RAKAN)</b> , as a dedicated digital platform to facilitate public complaints related to unity issues, with objective to strengthen the management of information and responses to community complaints while enhancing the efficiency of monitoring systems for safety and harmony at the grassroots level. <sup>127</sup>
23/10/2025	<b>Jelutong and Ipoh Timor MPs defended harmony by challenging the inappropriate parliamentary statement equating non-Muslims with Israeli Zionists</b> , arguing it could inflame racial sentiments. They clarified the statement unfairly targeted non-Muslims, stressing the issue was not about "rights or land." <sup>128</sup>
11/03/2025	<b>PM Anwar Ibrahim met with Kelantan religious teachers (from pondok and Islamic schools) to discuss unity and curbing hatred</b> . The teachers advised the PM to clearly communicate the government's initiatives for Muslims. <sup>129</sup>
09/03/2025	<b>Inspector-General of Police, Tan Sri Razarudin Husain, stressed that the</b>

<sup>125</sup> "Sistem e-Sepakat Bakal Diperluas Orang Ramai Lapor Isu Berkaitan Perpaduan - Aaron" *Bernama*. January 14, 2025. <https://www.bernama.com/bm/news.php/dunia/nnews.php?id=2382422>

<sup>126</sup> Yap Wan Xiang. "New All Party Parliamentary Group Established to Promote Racial and Religious Harmony" *SAYS*. March 6, 2025. <https://says.com/my/news/all-party-parliamentary-group-malaysia-racial-religious-harmony-established>

<sup>127</sup> "Digital platform 'Rakan' to tackle unity-related complaints" *New Straits Times*. June 19, 2025. <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2025/06/1233169/digital-platform-rakan-tackle-unity-related-complaints>

<sup>128</sup> Malaysia, *Dewan Rakyat Debates (Hansard)*, 15th Parliament, 4th Session, 3rd Sitting, October 23, 2025

<sup>129</sup> "PM meets Kelantan religious teachers for talks on unity, ending hatred" *Malaysiakini*. March 11, 2025. <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/736955>

	<b>police will take appropriate steps to ensure national harmony is preserved</b> and reminded the public to be responsible in the use of social media. The police advised the public to report any seditious statements so that immediate action can be taken. <sup>130</sup>
21/06/2025	<b>The All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Racial and Religious Harmony (APPGM-RRH) has agreed to draft a document defining hate speech, particularly concerning the 3Rs (race, religion, and royalty).</b> The group will draft a document on the definition of hate speech aligned with Malaysia's plural society. <sup>131</sup>
22/07/2025	<b>Cardinal Sebastian Francis paid a courtesy visit to Menteri Besar Sanusi Nor and senior PAS ulamas,</b> bringing a message of peace and a symbolic gift of sambal to signify goodwill and interfaith harmony. <sup>132</sup>
31/07/2025	<b>The MADANI government, through the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP), aims to replace race-based solutions with needs-based approaches</b> for social justice and equitable opportunities. Initiatives covering economics, education, and infrastructure were announced to ensure all communities benefit from national development. <sup>133</sup>
02/08/2025	<b>Sarawak Premier Abang Johari Openg announced that Sarawak will be the first state in Malaysia to establish a diversity, equality, and inclusivity (DEI) unit,</b> stating these DEI principles align with the administration's inclusive post-Covid-19 development strategy. <sup>134</sup>
14/10/2025	<b>The Malaysian government has officially recognized the Baba Nyonya community as a distinct sub-ethnic group,</b> permitting them to list "Baba Nyonya" on official documents, acknowledging their unique blend of Chinese and Malay heritage. <sup>135</sup>
10/12/2025	<b>The Cabinet mandated a full review and overhaul of dress-code rules nationwide</b> due to public outcry over women being refused entry to police stations for violating dress codes. This directive aims to stop moral policing

<sup>130</sup> Umavathi Ramayah. "Individu keluar komen berbau perkauman di media sosial juga boleh diambil tindakan tegas - KPN" *Astro Awani*. March 9, 2025. <https://www.astroawani.com/berita-malaysia/individu-keluar-komen-berbau-perkauman-di-media-sosial-juga-boleh-diambil-tindakan-tegas-kpn-511743>

<sup>131</sup> "Cross-party group drawing up document to define hate speech" *Free Malaysia Today*. August 21, 2025. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/08/21/cross-party-group-drawing-up-document-to-combat-hate-speech>

<sup>132</sup> Predeep Nambiar. "Cardinal brings message of peace and sambal to Sanusi" *Free Malaysia Today*. July 22, 2025. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/07/22/cardinal-brings-message-of-peace-and-sambal-to-sanusi>

<sup>133</sup> "Malaysia shifts from race-based to needs-based policies under 13MP to promote social justice and equal opportunities, says PM" *Malay Mail*. July 31, 2025. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/07/31/malaysia-shifts-from-race-based-to-needs-based-policies-under-13mp-to-promote-social-justice-and-equal-opportunities-says-pm/185969>

<sup>134</sup> "Sarawak to be first state with diversity unit" *Free Malaysia Today*. August 2, 2025. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/08/02/sarawak-to-be-first-state-with-diversity-unit>

<sup>135</sup> Divya Theresa Ravi & Khoo Jian Teng. "Baba Nyonya officially recognised" *The Star*. October 14, 2025. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/10/14/baba-nyonya-officially-recognised>

and ensure all police stations are safe, accessible spaces. <sup>136</sup>
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We have found 12 instances where the government and/or politicians have used their influence to spread messages of peace and harmony. On 23 October 2025, Members of Parliament from Jelutong and Ipoh Timor took a firm stand in defence of inter-communal harmony when a statement equating non-Muslims with Israeli Zionists was raised in Parliament. They objected to the remark as inappropriate and potentially inflammatory, emphasising that such language could aggravate racial and religious tensions in a plural society. Importantly, they clarified that the matter under discussion was not about issues of “rights or land,” but concerned a statement that unfairly targeted the non-Muslim community. Their intervention demonstrated the role elected representatives can play in immediately correcting misleading narratives and preventing divisive rhetoric from gaining legitimacy within legislative proceedings.

Following widespread public backlash over instances where women were reportedly turned away from police stations due to dress-code enforcement, the Cabinet ordered a comprehensive review and overhaul of dress-code rules at police stations nationwide. The Government stressed that no individual particularly victims seeking urgent assistance should ever be denied access to police services because of attire. This directive signalled a clear rejection of practices perceived as moral policing and reaffirmed that public institutions must remain safe, neutral, and accessible to all Malaysians regardless of background or appearance.

Further strengthening the digital approach, the Kementerian Perpaduan Negara introduced the National Public Community Complaints Network (Rakan), a dedicated platform to facilitate complaints relating to unity issues. Its minister, Aaron Ago Dagang, explained that the initiative would improve the management of information and enhance monitoring systems for safety and harmony at the community level. The platform reflects a shift towards structured, data-driven governance in managing racial and religious sensitivities. Although commendable, a mechanism such as this which operates under executive supervision will beg the question of transparency, operating framework, and selectiveness.

Another notable institutional development in 2025 was the establishment of the All-Party Parliamentary Group Malaysia on Racial and Religious Harmony (APPGM-RRH), a bipartisan platform which brings together MPs, senators, civil society actors, and subject-matter experts to propose and identify systemic legislative, and awareness-based solutions to issues affecting racial and religious harmony in Malaysia. By creating a formal parliamentary space for cross-party dialogue and policy engagement on these issues, the initiative signals a more structured and consultative approach to strengthening social cohesion.

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<sup>136</sup> “‘No turning away’: Cabinet orders dress code overhaul at police stations after public outcry” *Malay Mail*. December 10, 2025. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/12/10/no-turning-away-cabinet-orders-dress-code-overhaul-at-police-stations-after-public-outcry/201435>

On a separate instance, on 14 October 2025, the Malaysian Government officially recognised the Baba Nyonya community as a distinct sub-ethnic group, allowing members to register “Baba Nyonya” as their ethnicity on birth certificates and identity documents. The Baba Nyonya community represents a unique heritage blending Chinese and Malay cultural traditions. This formal recognition acknowledges their historical presence and cultural identity, reinforcing the principle that Malaysia’s diversity is not only tolerated but institutionally respected. This government action sets a welcome precedent in acknowledging ethnic and sub-ethnic groups that have not yet been formally “identified” or “recognised” in Malaysia. Currently, Pusat KOMAS’s ongoing campaign advocates for the official recognition of more than 130 ethnic and sub-ethnic groups, highlighting the need for greater inclusivity and representation.

Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim took the spotlight when he met with a group of religious teachers from Kelantan, including representatives from pondok and Islamic religious schools, to discuss Islamic matters and the importance of stopping hatred while focusing on unity. During the engagement, religious figures advised the Prime Minister to communicate government initiatives for the Muslim community more clearly. The meeting underscored the importance of dialogue between political leadership and religious educators in shaping narratives that emphasise moderation and cohesion.

Besides politicians, Pusat KOMAS welcomes the message purported by Inspector-General of Police, Razarudin Husain, when he issued a stern warning that individuals posting racially inflammatory or religiously sensitive content on social media would face firm action without compromise. He stressed that the police would take necessary steps to preserve national harmony and urged the public to use social media responsibly. The call for citizens to report seditious statements reflects a law-enforcement approach aimed at deterring online incitement before it translates into real-world tension.

A refreshing and encouraging development emerged when Cardinal Sebastian Francis made a rare courtesy visit to Kedah Menteri Besar Muhammad Sanusi Md Nor and senior PAS religious leaders. Accompanied by a symbolic gift of sambal and a message of peace, the visit was widely seen as a genuine gesture of interfaith goodwill. The engagement demonstrated how personal outreach and symbolic diplomacy—particularly by respected leaders within their religious communities—can effectively bridge differences, foster understanding, and strengthen mutual respect with political leaders.

On 31 July 2025, while tabling the 13th Malaysia Plan (13MP) in the Dewan Rakyat, Anwar Ibrahim announced the Government’s determination to shift from race-based solutions towards needs-based approaches to achieve social justice and equitable opportunities. The proposed initiatives spanned economic, educational, and infrastructure sectors, aiming to ensure that all communities benefit from national development. This policy direction signalled a structural attempt to reduce ethnic polarisation by focusing assistance on socio-economic need rather than racial categorisation.

Sarawak continues to pave the way for racial inclusivity and promoters of social cohesion when it became the first state to announce plans to establish a diversity, equality, and inclusivity (D2EI) unit. Premier Abang Johari Openg stated that these principles aligned with the state's post-Covid-19 development strategy, which emphasises inclusivity. By institutionalising diversity and inclusivity at the state level, Sarawak positioned itself at the forefront of proactive governance aimed at embedding unity within administrative structures rather than treating it solely as a reactive concern. Pusat KOMAS remains hopeful that many other states will follow suit in the near future.

## Private Sector

Date	Effort
05/12/2025	<b>AirAsia has announced a modification to its iconic red uniform, allowing female cabin crew the option to wear the hijab while on duty</b> , thereby offering them increased choices regarding their professional attire and the observance of their faith. <sup>137</sup>

AirAsia's decision to allow female cabin crew the option of wearing the hijab with its iconic red uniform represents more than a corporate dress-code update - it is a meaningful step toward strengthening social cohesion in a multicultural society like Malaysia. By providing women with greater autonomy in how they present themselves at work, the airline acknowledges the diversity of religious expression among its employees while maintaining a unified corporate identity.

First, the move promotes inclusion by normalising religious expression within a high-visibility, international-facing brand. Cabin crew members are ambassadors of the airline and, by extension, the country. Allowing the hijab as part of the official uniform sends a powerful signal that religious identity and professional excellence are not mutually exclusive. It affirms that Muslim women do not have to choose between career advancement and adherence to their faith. This fosters a workplace culture where diversity is accommodated rather than suppressed. Importantly, the choice of wardrobe should remain entirely at the discretion of each individual employee, ensuring that no one is coerced into wearing—or refraining from wearing—any particular attire.

Second, the policy encourages equality of opportunity. When employees feel respected and able to practise their beliefs without institutional barriers, morale and engagement tend to

<sup>137</sup> "Hijab-friendly uniforms take flight as AirAsia lets its crew put their own spin on red" *Malay Mail*. December 5, 2025. [https://www.malaymail.com/news/life/2025/12/05/hijab-friendly-uniforms-take-flight-as-airasia-lets-its-crew-put-their-own-spin-on-red/200879?fbclid=IwY2xjawOfb\\_pleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFuWlBzemhVSkV6UEhRVGowc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHnRJEJ2Ai-yn2d8a9ya1luXN7i1Pr64pGTgHoVEKzll2QHFEbOREqqgrq-f\\_aem\\_YJL4ej042yCyPal7MDiPJQ](https://www.malaymail.com/news/life/2025/12/05/hijab-friendly-uniforms-take-flight-as-airasia-lets-its-crew-put-their-own-spin-on-red/200879?fbclid=IwY2xjawOfb_pleHRuA2FlbQIxMABicmlkETFuWlBzemhVSkV6UEhRVGowc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHnRJEJ2Ai-yn2d8a9ya1luXN7i1Pr64pGTgHoVEKzll2QHFEbOREqqgrq-f_aem_YJL4ej042yCyPal7MDiPJQ)

improve. In a broader societal context, visible representation in prominent industries helps dismantle stereotypes and promotes acceptance. Non-Muslim colleagues and passengers are exposed to diversity in a normalised, everyday setting, which gradually strengthens mutual understanding.

Third, the decision reflects a balanced approach to unity – one that does not require uniformity in identity, but instead accommodates difference within shared spaces. Social cohesion in Malaysia depends not on erasing distinctions, but on ensuring that public and professional institutions are flexible enough to embrace them. By integrating religious accommodation into a globally recognised brand image, AirAsia demonstrates how the private sector can play a constructive role in modelling inclusive practices.

## Community

Date	Incident
03/12/2025	<b>Cikgu Ranjitha uses the national language as a unifying tool in her classroom</b> , teaching students from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and thus fostering unity among young children. <sup>138</sup>

Promoting unity and social cohesion can start from anywhere and even in our neighbourhood. By using the national language as a unifying tool, Cikgu Ranjitha creates a common space where children learn, communicate, and interact on equal footing. Language, particularly at a young age, shapes not only academic development but also social bonds.

When students of different backgrounds speak, collaborate, and solve problems together in a shared language, it strengthens mutual understanding and reduces social barriers that might otherwise form along ethnic lines.

Her efforts also reinforce the constitutional and symbolic role of Bahasa Malaysia as a cornerstone of national identity. Beyond grammar and vocabulary, the classroom becomes a microcosm of unity, where diversity is normalised and friendships are formed without prejudice. In fostering inclusive learning environments from an early age, educators like Cikgu Ranjitha contribute significantly to long-term social cohesion, cultivating a generation that views multiculturalism as a strength rather than a source of division.

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<sup>138</sup> Azureen Zainal. "Early childhood educators lead the way in fostering national unity" *Free Malaysia Today*, December 3, 2025. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2025/12/03/early-childhood-educators-lead-the-way-in-fostering-national-unity>

## Conclusion & Recommendations

The Malaysia Racism Report 2025 offers a careful and forthright account of the realities shaping race and religion in contemporary Malaysia. While the findings reveal that discrimination whether interpersonal, structural, or institutional continues to manifest across multiple sectors, they also illuminate something equally important: a growing awareness, an expanding space for dialogue, and a clear pathway toward meaningful reform.

At its core, this report is not merely a record of incidents, but a reflection of a society in transition. The patterns identified across workplaces, education, housing, governance, and public discourse demonstrate that racism is neither isolated nor inevitable. Rather, it is shaped by choices: in policy, in leadership, and in everyday interactions. This recognition is, in itself, a source of optimism. What is constructed can also be transformed.

Encouragingly, the report highlights not only challenges but also efforts by individuals, institutions, and communities to promote inclusion, accountability, and mutual respect. These efforts, though sometimes incremental, signal a broader shift toward embracing equality as a shared national value rather than a contested ideal. They reflect a Malaysia that is increasingly willing to confront truths while remaining committed to unity.

Fundamentally, Malaysia's diversity has always been one of its greatest strengths. When anchored in dignity, fairness, and understanding, it becomes a foundation for resilience and progress. The insights drawn from this report reinforce the importance of moving beyond reactive responses toward sustained, principled action through stronger legal protections, more equitable policies, and continued investment in education and intercommunal engagement.

Ultimately, the way forward lies not in framing race and religion as dividing lines, but in recognising them as part of a shared national fabric that must be protected and nurtured. By approaching these issues with openness, empathy, and a commitment to justice, Malaysia is well-positioned to strengthen social cohesion and build a future where equality is not aspirational, but realised in practice.

In that spirit, this report stands as both a mirror and a guide: reflecting present realities, while affirming that a more inclusive, fair, and harmonious Malaysia is not only possible but within reach.

In this regard, Pusat KOMAS calls upon the Malaysian government to:

1. urgently establish a **National Harmony Commission**—an independent body mandated to address racial and religious conflicts, promote unity and social cohesion, advise the government and enforcement agencies, and provide comprehensive training for all civil servants. Such an institution is essential to building long-term, structural safeguards for peace and mutual respect in our diverse society.

2. to pursue institutional reforms that address inequalities across all sectors. It is high time for Malaysia to move beyond race-based frameworks and adopt systems grounded in need, fairness, and merit, ensuring that every individual has equitable access to opportunities and protection under the law.

# Special Report: Analysis of The MADANI Government's 2026 Budget

## INTRODUCTION

At the last quarter of every year, the appointed Finance Minister of Malaysia will present the federal budget in the house of representatives, before it gets voted on by the House. Malaysian Budget 2026 was presented by Malaysia's Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim on 10th October 2025, which is the fourth budget framework under the MADANI government and the inaugural budget to be implemented within the framework of the 13th Malaysia Plan (RMK13)<sup>139</sup>. With the theme "Belanjawan Rakyat" or the People's Budget, it allocated RM470 billion in total for public expenditure, and the House passed the Supply Bill (Budget) 2026 by a majority voice vote, officially endorsing the government's spending plan for this year.

As Malaysia enters 2026, the economy is expected to grow steadily amid modest inflation and a strengthening labour market. 2026 Budget viewed to remain committed to fiscal prudence and aim to narrow the federal deficit while continuing to support households and growth industries. This report is written to analyse Malaysia 2026 Budget, as far as what was presented, how different it is from previous years in terms of inclusivity of the allocation of the budget.

## BUDGET 2026: MOVING TOWARDS NEED-BASED ALLOCATION?

2026 Budget emphasises both transformation of the economy and inclusivity for the people. In this context, Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim framed the budget as the People's Budget as it focused on targeted, outcome-driven assistance that improves quality of life for all Malaysians. It continues to prioritize key public spending areas, largely in line with 2025, but with a clearer shift towards need-based support. Key differences from previous years budget including a move from blanket subsidies towards targeted assistance and new measures for vulnerable groups.

Continuing from 2025, this year's budget significantly expanded targeted cash transfers including Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR) and SARA programs, which were raised to RM15 billion from RM13 billion in 2025, to cover roughly 9 million households<sup>140</sup>. New eligibility

<sup>139</sup>The Star. "Dewan Rakyat Passes Budget 2026." December 1, 2025. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/12/01/dewan-rakyat-passes-budget-2026>

<sup>140</sup>Ministry of Finance Malaysia. "Increase in STR SARA Allocations Proves Government's Commitment to Strengthen Social Safety Net." Accessed March 26, 2026. <https://www.mof.gov.my/portal/en/news/press-citations/increase-in-str-sara-allocations-proves-govts-commitment-to-strengthen-social-safety-net-mof>.

rules sharpen targeting: for example, single low-income recipients now receive RM50/month under SARA and one million “hardcore poor” e-Kasih households receive double SARA up to RM200/month while all adult age 18 above will receive a one-off RM100 SARA credit scheduled in February 2026<sup>141</sup>. These changes contrast with previous budgets, which either gave smaller universal aid or had narrower criteria.

The 2026 budget also builds on prior subsidy reforms by focusing support on the needy. Annual savings of RM15.5 billion are projected from the continued rationalisation of subsidies for electricity, diesel and RON95 petrol. The targeted RON95 petrol subsidy or BUDI95 scheme was continued, with only motorists holding valid driving licenses benefitting, while diesel subsidies remain restricted to key users (e.g. fishermen, public buses) rather than all consumers<sup>142</sup>. This measure is designed to protect the majority of consumers, with 85% expected to be shielded from tariff increases<sup>143</sup>.

The budget introduces several targeted schemes for informal and vulnerable workers. A new i-Saraan Plus EPF program matches gig and e-hailing drivers’ contribution up to RM600 per year, capped at RM6,000 lifetime<sup>144</sup>. The passed Gig Workers Act 2025 made SOCSO mandatory for gig workers; the budget subsidises 70% of first-year SOCSO contributions to encourage uptake. The i-Suri scheme (voluntary EPF for housewives) raised the eligible age to 60, and senior-citizen welfare was increased through the elderly welfare fund totalling RM1.26 billion. An initiative called “Second Chance Programme” was included as well in the budget<sup>145</sup>, with RM15 million allocated for former drug addicts and ex-convict to find new jobs after their release, while RM 10 million allocated for the Refugee Registration Document Programme. This budget extends social safety nets explicitly to gig/informal sectors and other groups, making assistance more inclusive.

2026 Budget broadened support for children and families. Bantuan Awal Persekolah RM150 aid was expanded from only poor students to all 5.2 million pupils in public schools<sup>146</sup>, aid to underprivileged students was extended up through Form Five (former budget only until

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<sup>141</sup>Malay Mail. “Budget 2026: RM100 SARA Payout Returns — All Malaysians Aged 18 and Above to Benefit in 2026.” October 10, 2025. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/10/10/budget-2026-rm100-sara-payout-returns-all-malaysians-aged-18-and-above-to-benefit-in-2026/194161>.

<sup>142</sup>Ministry of Finance Malaysia. “Malaysia on Track to Meet Deficit Target as BUDI95 Subsidy Saves up to RM4 bln.” March 26, 2026. <https://www.mof.gov.my/portal/en/news/press-citations/malaysia-on-track-to-meet-deficit-target-as-budi95-subsidy-saves-up-to-rm4-bln>.

<sup>143</sup>The Star. “Budget That Supports Households.” October 11, 2025. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2025/10/11/budget-that-supports-households>.

<sup>144</sup>Malay Mail. “Budget 2026: Gig Workers to Get up to RM600 a Year in EPF Matching under New i-Saraan Plus Scheme.” October 10, 2025. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/10/10/budget-2026-gig-workers-to-get-up-to-rm600-a-year-in-epf-matching-under-new-i-saraan-plus-scheme/194145>.

<sup>145</sup>Malay Mail. “Anwar Announces Sweeping Social Support: RM14b for Disabled; RM15m for Ex-Addicts and Ex-Convicts.” October 10, 2025. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2025/10/10/anwar-announces-sweeping-social-support-rm14b-for-disabled-rm15m-for-ex-addicts-and-ex-convicts/194139>.

<sup>146</sup>Malay Mail. “Every Child to Receive RM150 Early-Schooling Aid Widens as Govt Pushes for Fairer, More Inclusive Education.” January 3, 2026. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2026/01/03/every-child-to-receive-rm150-early-schooling-aid-widens-as-govt-pushes-for-fairer-more-inclusive-education/204116>.

Form Three)<sup>147</sup>, and allocates RM150/month allowances to 150,000 disabled schoolchildren). Tax reliefs for families were widened: childcare/early education fee relief now covers registered daycare and after-school transit centres for children up to age 12 (previously limited to TASKA/TADIKAs centres for children from age 6 and below). Parents of disabled children receive larger relief with up to RM10,000<sup>148</sup>. By comparison, earlier budgets had narrower scopes with Budget 2025's schooling aid remained income-targeted and childcare relief covered younger children only.

Budget 2026 avoids major new tax burdens and instead fine-tunes spending. The government maintains a cautious fiscal stance while expanding social and developmental programmes. 2026 allocation largely builds on many priorities similar to previous years, but with sharper targeting and efficiency.

A shift from race-based to needs-based allocation reduces opportunities for discrimination by tying the monetary incentive to objective socioeconomic indicators vis-à-vis race. Initiatives such as expanded STR and SARA, targeted BUDI95 and the new i-Saraan Plus all lend themselves to needs-based delivery as they can be administered through verifiable registries i.e e-Kasih, tax records, EPF/SOCSO enrolment, by way of automated transfers. Automation and clear eligibility rules limit discretionary decisions and over time, this lower inter-group resentment and fosters social cohesion because all allocations given are visibly tied to poverty, disability or need.

Need-based policy also tackles the structural drivers of exclusion by directing resources to the exact barriers that produce unequal outcomes i.e. cash transfer to stabilised household consumption; education allowances to keep children in school; EPF and SOCSO subsidies to integrate informal workers into social protection. These interventions narrow gaps in capability and opportunities irrespective of ethnicity, which is a direct route to reducing deprivation based on race.

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<sup>147</sup>Bernama. "KUALA LUMPUR: Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim Said ..." October 10, 2025. <https://www.bernama.com/en/news.php?id=2477388>.

<sup>148</sup>RinggitPlus. "Your Personal Budget 2026 Action Plan." March 26, 2026. <https://ringgitplus.com/en/blog/featured/your-personal-budget-2026-action-plan.html>.

## **INCLUSIVE BUDGET: EQUALITY VS EQUITY**

In public finance, equality and equity describe two distinct approaches to distributing resources. Equality means giving everyone the same resources or opportunities, whereas equity means allocating according to need so that all individuals reach a similar outcome. For example, an equal subsidy pays every household the same amount, while an equitable subsidy gives larger support to poorer households so they can meet their basic needs. Equal treatment of all constituents has been a long-standing aspiration of many governments, but it can fall short when groups have very different starting points. Equity compensates for those differences by targeting the disadvantaged, helping achieve the spirit of fairness.

An equality driven budget treats all citizens identically. Everyone might receive the same tax break, subsidy of public services, regardless of individual need. This is straightforward and visible (e.g., every Malaysian adult gets RM100), and is often promoted as fair. However, it overlooks that people and regions differ. Equity recognises these differences. It allocates more resources to those with greater need (e.g., extra aid for persons with disabilities (PWDs) and their family; funding for rural schools; or elderly care) so that outcomes like access to health or education become more uniform across groups. Equality provides a simple fairness “same for all”, but equity adjusts support “in the interests of giving all people access to health, safety, and welfare”<sup>149</sup>. In public budgeting, this often means supplementing universal allocations with special programs for the disadvantaged.

A truly inclusive budget must effectively balance equality and equity. Equality-oriented measures maintain social cohesion by treating citizens uniformly, which is essential for a multi-ethnic society and for fundamental rights. Equity-oriented measures ensure inclusion: they address poverty and disadvantage so that all Malaysians can meet basic needs. Neglecting equity risks leaving behind poor, disabled, or remote populations, neglecting equality risks social discontent from those who feel unfairly excluded from benefits. This dual focus ensures that everyone's basic needs are met and that benefits are distributed fairly, leading to a budget where all needs are included.

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<sup>149</sup>National Civic League. “The Basics of Equity in Budgeting.” March 26, 2026. <https://www.nationalcivicleague.org/ncr-article/the-basics-of-equity-in-budgeting/>.

## EQUALITY + EQUITY: BUDGET 2026 IN PRACTICE

Budget 2026 presents itself as an equity-driven yet inclusive budget. It maintains universal programs alongside ramped-up targeted support for those in need. Whether this mix is sufficient to be all-inclusive requires analysis.

The budget continues Malaysia's tradition of affirmative action and social assistance. Beyond the PWD, elderly care and education measures noted above, examples include: extending special needs education (e.g., autism centres in Sabah and Sarawak), increasing childcare subsidies, and raising relief for low-income households. Rural areas receive flagship projects (e.g. Pan-Borneo Highway completion, Sabah-Sarawak cable link) to further ensure parity with Peninsular Malaysia.

On the other hand, the budget also reaffirms universal spending. The largest share of development expenditures goes to national infrastructure or industry (e.g., roads, rail, ports, SMEs). Education spending remains high, benefitting children of all backgrounds. Healthcare and public transport expansion serve the general population. One important question that must be addressed is: is there any allocation within Budget 2026 should be a universal allocation rather than target-focused, or more specifically, race-focused?

The ethnic dimension merits a specific note. Budget 2026 continues Bumiputera-centric programs (e.g., RM10 billion *Syarikat Jaminan Pembiayaan Perniagaan Berhad* or SJPP scheme guarantee set aside for Bumiputera out of RM30 billion, RM2.4 billion contractor quota, hundreds of millions more in MARA and GLC initiatives.) These are intended as equity within the Bumiputera community, many of whom are poor, which according to the Department of Statistic Malaysia (DOSM) at 6.6% in Absolute Poverty (Chinese:1.5%; Indian: 3.1%; Others: 5.6%).

However, this ethnic budgeting begs the question that universal programs could achieve similar ends without race criteria, as if we follow the statistics, Bumiputera community will receive the most, while taking into account other communities as well, helping everyone in need instead of only targeted races. Such a universal approach would uphold equality while still aiding the needy. Budget 2026 makes some moves in this direction (e.g., SARA cash assistance for all Malaysian adults). Advancing this vision, the need-based policy will be capable of supporting all impoverished households, rather than a select few, thereby mitigating opportunities allocated based on race.

Malaysia, although seems to move toward inclusivity, is still riddled with corruption issues. We raise a question on how to ensure that the funds will go to small companies and poor contractors, with full transparency in all its processes, without any act of cronyism and rent-seeking hindering the mission in helping those in need.

## **MOVING AWAY FROM RACIALLY-CONDITIONAL ALLOCATIONS**

A recurring pattern in Malaysia's fiscal architecture is the coexistence of two instruments for essentially the same objective: (1) a broadly accessible allocation (race-neutral) intended to reach all eligible beneficiaries; and (2) a parallel, identity-based allocation targeted at the same activity or sector. While politically defensible as a two-pronged approach i.e. universal access plus affirmative uplift, the net effect is predictable. Take an example of a Bumiputera-only policy: Bumiputera households or firms face a higher probability of receiving support for that specific activity. This is because they are effectively able to draw from *both* instruments: they are eligible to apply for and benefit from the universal pool *and* they have exclusive access to the parallel, identity-based allocation. In sharp contrast, non-Bumiputera citizens can only access the single, universal pool.

This creates a de facto prioritisation of race in policy outcomes even in the presence of a universal instrument. The existence of the parallel track significantly distorts the distribution of resources and opportunities. Consequently, the budget which purports to have equality/equity balance, instead inadvertently constructs a system that institutionalised a racial preference, undermining the principles of an equitable budget framework.

This pattern is observable in Budget 2026, particularly areas such as SME financing, entrepreneurship support, and procurement guarantees. For example, the expansion of the SJPP credit guarantee scheme is framed as a universal instrument available to SMEs regardless of ethnicity, yet a substantial part of the allocation within the same facility is reserved exclusively for Bumiputera entrepreneurs. While the total allocation of RM30 billion in allocation for the scheme, RM10 billion are earmarked for Bumiputera companies and contractors as per Bumiputera Economic Transformation Plan 2035 (PuTERA35), which make up 33.33% of the allocation reserved not with need in mind, but identity<sup>150</sup>. The remaining 20 billion is allocated to the universal pool, which is accessible to any entity, including Bumiputera companies.

While the objective of correcting structural imbalances is legitimate, the duplication of instruments targeting the same outcome leads to an implicit prioritisation of race fiscal outcomes. Where specific historical disadvantages persist for identifiable groups, the budget can retain narrowly framed, evidence-based affirmative measures. However, such measures should be time-limited, proportional and justified by transparent impact evaluations rather than broad categorical entitlements. This raises questions about whether such designs align with the stated policy ambition of moving towards needs-based and inclusive development, especially where the underlying objective concerns basic economic participation rather than structural exclusion unique to a single ethnic group.

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<sup>150</sup>Bernama. "Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar ..." March 26, 2026. <https://www.bernama.com/lite/news.php?id=2477213>.

There are good reasons to shift certain budget allocation away from race-based frameworks. From a normative standpoint, allocation aimed at meeting basic necessities i.e. food, education, healthcare access, are most coherently justified when they are distributed based on need rather than ethnicity. In a diverse society, race-neutral access to fundamental welfare provisions strengthens social cohesion and reinforces the idea that all Malaysians are equal citizens.

From a fiscal perspective, having two separate systems for the same objectives reduces efficiency and, to a certain extent, opens up opportunities for abuse of allocations. Resources are effectively spread across overlapping mechanisms instead of being concentrated where deprivation is greatest. Rationalising such allocations into a single need-based instrument would allow the state to deepen support for groups facing severe disadvantage, including persons with disabilities, children from Hardcore and Absolute Poverty households, the elderly, and residents of high-poverty regions such as parts of Sabah and Sarawak. Most importantly, this approach does not ignore the fact that poverty in Malaysia remains disproportionately concentrated among Bumiputera communities. It just tackles the reality through targeting those who are poor, not just those of a certain race.

A clear separation between universal allocation and affirmative empowerment allocation would improve policy transparency and evaluative clarity. Moving beyond race for basic, universal support does not mean scrapping all Bumiputera-focused policies at earliest convenience. This type of affirmative action should instead be time-bound, with the duration publicly disclosed and accompanied by a clear report detailing the recipient's transition. This is necessary to assess the tangible effectiveness of the programme, reinforce programme discipline, and mitigate dependency on the allocation over time<sup>151</sup>. This way, it lets the country ramp up affirmative action where it is needed most; big structural issues such as market access, building wealth, land ownership and addressing educational gaps, rather than just provision of basic consumption supports (e.g. SARA cash assistance) that is equally relevant across ethnic groups, with periodic evaluation to prevent permanent entrenchment without review of its effectiveness.

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<sup>151</sup>Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS). *P90: Bumiputera Vendor Development and Small Business Participation*. Policy Paper No. 90. Kuala Lumpur: IDEAS, 2026. [https://www.ideas.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/P90\\_Bumi\\_Vendor\\_Small.pdf](https://www.ideas.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/P90_Bumi_Vendor_Small.pdf).

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of inclusive budgeting, which is a mix of equal and equitable allocation, is to ensure all Malaysians can access all basic necessities as human beings i.e. foods, clothes, shelters. The potential benefits of moving selected allocations away from racial lines not only ensure that all Malaysians' basic needs can be fulfilled, but also can improve fiscal efficiency, enhanced social cohesion and a clearer alignment between budgetary objectives and distributive outcomes. However, risks remain, including political resistance, people accidentally being left out during the transition, and concerns over losing affirmative action. These risks underscore the importance of smart planning, transparency and robust monitoring mechanisms.

In sum, Malaysia's Budget 2026 reflects an evolving integration between equality and equity in fiscal allocation. However, the real model of this 2026 Budget is still unclear. Equality and equity are useful guidelines principle when they are applied according to differing needs i.e. need-based allocation should be the default for universal services where they effectively reduce disadvantage, but when need-based approaches fail to produce structural change, time-limited race-based measures are justified, within the correct implementation of affirmative action principle. This budget in its initial change can be read as a practical adjustment. By retaining race-focused measures where they address structural disadvantages, while making sure general welfare for everyone is based on need, not race. Malaysia can advance towards a budget that is simultaneously fairer, more efficient, and more consistent with the goal of inclusive development.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1 - Guiding Principles and Conceptual Frameworks

This annex sets out the legal and conceptual frameworks used in the Malaysia Racism Report 2025 to determine whether an incident falls within the scope of the report, and how it is assessed and categorised. It should be read together with the Methodology section. The frameworks set out below are built on the guiding principles used in previous editions of the report and continue to form the basis for objective and fair standards of analysis, categorisation, and reporting.

<p>Principle of equality and non-discrimination</p>	<p>A principle which is proclaimed in the first article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR): “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”<sup>152</sup> and reiterated in international and regional human rights treaties. This report is grounded by this foundational principle.</p> <p>Equality is also enshrined in Article 8 of our Federal Constitution which states:</p> <p>(1) All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law.</p> <p>(2) Except as expressly authorized by this Constitution, there shall be no discrimination against citizens on the ground only of religion, race, descent, place of birth or gender in any law or in the appointment to any office or employment under a public authority or in the administration of any law relating to the acquisition, holding or disposition of property or the establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment.</p> <p>(3) There shall be no discrimination in favour of any person on the ground that he is a subject of the Ruler of any State.</p> <p>(4) No public authority shall discriminate against any person on the ground that he is resident or carrying on business in any part of the Federation outside the jurisdiction of the authority. (5) This Article does not invalidate or prohibit—</p> <p>(a) any provision regulating personal law;</p> <p>(b) any provision or practice restricting office or employment</p>
<p>Racism</p>	<p>There are no universally accepted legal definitions on the term racism. Even in Malaysia, racism is not defined in any legal documents. However, the most comprehensive provision on racism is highlighted by Article 4 of ICERD:</p>

<sup>152</sup> United Nations, ‘Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ (*United Nations*) <<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>> accessed 27 February 2024.

	<p><i>“... all propaganda and all organisations which are based on ideas or theories of superiority of one race or group of persons of one colour or ethnic origin, or which attempt to justify or promote racial hatred and discrimination in any form....”</i><sup>153</sup></p> <p>This report adopts the definition of racism in as stated in “Dimensions of Racism”, published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (“OHCHR”):</p> <p><i>“a construct that assigns a certain race and/or ethnic group to a position of power over others on the basis of physical and cultural attributes, as well as economic wealth, involving hierarchical relations where the ‘superior’ race exercises domination and control over others.”</i><sup>154</sup></p> <p>Racism is a broader experience and practice than racial discrimination (see below). It includes racist ideologies, prejudiced behaviour, structural arrangements and institutionalised practices resulting in racial inequality as well as the fallacious notion that discriminatory relations between groups are morally and scientifically justifiable.<sup>155</sup> Racism can manifest in the form of racial jokes, slurs or even hate crimes. Racism can also be deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs.</p>
<p>Racial Discrimination</p>	<p>Guided by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), racial discrimination is defined as:</p> <p><i>“...any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life.”</i><sup>156</sup></p> <p>In order to determine whether a particular action is considered to be racial discrimination, the action has to be assessed whether “that action has an unjustifiable disparate impact upon a group distinguished by race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.”<sup>157</sup></p>

<sup>153</sup> ‘International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination’ (OHCHR) <<https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-elimination-all-forms-racial>> accessed 27 February 2024.

<sup>154</sup> International Labour Organisation (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), & Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

<sup>155</sup> Article 2 (2), Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice, available here: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instrumentsmechanisms/instruments/declaration-race-and-racial-prejudice>

<sup>156</sup> Article 1, International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)

<sup>157</sup> CERD, General Recommendation No. 14, paragraph 2. This includes practices that are non-discriminatory in their purpose but have a discriminatory effect. See CERD Concluding Observations on the initial, second and third periodic report of the United States of America, adopted by the Committee during its 59th Session (2001), U.N. Doc. CERD/C/59/Misc.17/Rev.3, on the “the persistence of the discriminatory

	<p><u>Affirmative Action</u></p> <p>However, special measures such as affirmative action policies are allowed. Affirmative policies are defined “<b>for the purpose of securing adequate advancement of certain racial or ethnic groups or individuals requiring such protection as may be necessary in order to ensure such groups or individuals’ equal enjoyment or exercise of human rights</b>”<sup>158</sup> and it does not result in racial discrimination provided that such measures do not lead to the creation or maintenance of separate rights for different groups. Affirmative action also must have its predetermined end once the objective has been achieved by the specific target groups.</p> <p>The United Nations in August 2009 released an explanation note in the form of General Recommendation No. 32, titled “The meaning and scope of special measures in ICERD”, which provides further guidelines and explanations for the implementation of ICERD.<sup>159</sup> Amongst the conditions for the adoption and implementation of special measures include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Special measures should be appropriate to the situation to be remedied, be legitimate, necessary in a democratic society, respect the principles of fairness and proportionality, and be temporary. The measures should be designed and implemented on the basis of need, grounded in a realistic appraisal of the current situation of the individuals and communities concerned.<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Appraisals on the necessities of special measures should be carried out based on accurate data, disaggregated by race, colour, descent and ethnic or national origin and incorporating a gender perspective, on the socioeconomic and cultural status.</li><li>b. The conditions of the various groups in the population and their participation in the social and economic development of the country should also be included.</li></ol></li></ol> <p>Additionally, such actions “should not lead to the creation or maintenance of separate rights for different racial groups” and “they shall not be continued after the objectives for which they have been taken have been achieved”.</p>
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effects of the legacy of slavery, segregation, and destructive policies with regard to Native Americans.” available at: [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=A%2f56%2f18\(SUPP\)&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=A%2f56%2f18(SUPP)&Lang=en)

<sup>158</sup> For further discussion on special measures, see: UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, General Recommendation No. 32, CERD/C/GC/32, 2009, available here:

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=6&DocTypeID=11](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=6&DocTypeID=11)

<sup>159</sup> UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), General Recommendation No. 32, The meaning and scope of special measures in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms [of] Racial Discrimination, 24 September 2009, CERD/C/GC/32, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4adc30382.html>

	<p>As such, special measures should, therefore, be carefully tailored to meet the particular needs of the groups or individuals concerned. If the purported “special measures” do not fulfil the above standards, such actions are deemed to be racially discriminatory. This is, therefore, measures under Article 153 of the Federal Constitution are read.</p>
Xenophobia	<p>There is no internationally recognised legal definition of xenophobia. However, according to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, xenophobia is defined as:</p> <p><i>“behaviour specifically based on the perception that the other is foreign to or originates from outside the community or nation.”<sup>160</sup></i></p> <p><i>Xenophobia exists when “individuals are denied equal rights on account of real or perceived geographic origins of the said individuals or groups, or the values, beliefs and/or practices associated with such individuals or groups that make them appear as foreigners or outsiders.”<sup>161</sup></i></p> <p>Generally, xenophobia implies discrimination based on the perception of the other as foreign or originating from outside a community or a nation.<sup>162</sup></p>
Incitement and Hate Speech	<p>The term “incitement to violence” is included in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in article 20 (2):</p> <p>“Prohibition of advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.”</p> <p>Acts that constitute incitement to violence can include any communication that encourages violence against an individual or group. Incitement can take various forms, including political speeches and flyers, media articles, social media communications and visual arts products.</p> <p>Hate speech may suggest that the person or group - it is usually groups - is inferior and that they should be excluded or discriminated against on this basis including, for example, by limiting their access to education, employment or political positions. Notably, incitement to violence differs from “hate speech”. While all incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence is hate speech, not all hate speech constitutes incitement. While there is no legal definition of “hate</p>

<sup>160</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Report to the UN Human Rights Council on xenophobia, A/HRC/32/50, 13 May 2016, available here: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/32/50>

<sup>161</sup> UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Report to the UN Human Rights Council on xenophobia, A/HRC/32/50, 13 May 2016, available here: <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/32/50>

<sup>162</sup> Inter-Agency (International Labour Office (ILO), International Organization for Migration (IOM), and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in consultation with UNHCR), International Migration, Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia, August 2001, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/49353b4d2.html>, page 2

	<p>speech”, and the characterisation of what is “hateful” is subjective, hate speech is normally defined as any kind of communication in speech, writing or behaviour, that denigrates a person or a group on the basis of who they are, in other words based on their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race or other identity factor. <sup>163</sup></p>
Religious Discrimination	<p>For the purposes of this report, religious discrimination refers to adverse treatment, exclusion, restriction, unequal access, or coercive pressure directed at a person or group on the basis of religion, belief, religious practice, or perceived religious identity.</p> <p>This framework is grounded in both international human rights standards and the Malaysian constitutional context. At the domestic level, <b>Article 11(1) of the Federal Constitution</b> provides that every person has the right to profess and practise his or her religion, while <b>Article 8</b> affirms equality before the law and equal protection of the law. Read together, these provisions provide an important basis for assessing conduct, policies, and practices that burden or disadvantage persons on religious grounds. treatment in public or semi-public settings.</p>

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<sup>163</sup> United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, Plan of Action for Religious Leaders and Actors to Prevent Incitement to Violence that Could Lead to Atrocity Crimes, available at <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/Plan%20of%20Action%20Advanced%20Copy.pdf>

## Appendix 2 - References for Contextual Framework

### A. Malaysia's Legal and Institutional Framework Related to Racial Equality

#### Malaysia's Federal Constitution

The Federal Constitution of Malaysia is a written constitution that came into force in 1957 and is the supreme law of Malaysia consisting of a total of 183 Articles. The Constitution is an amalgamation of two former pieces of legislation namely the Federation of Malaya Agreement (1948) and the Independence Constitution (1957). The Federal Constitution of Malaysia establishes the Federation as a constitutional monarchy in which the Yang di-pertuan Agong rules as the Head of State and further established 3 branches of the government i.e. the Legislative arm namely the Dewan Rakyat and Dewan Negara (Senate), the Judiciary led by the Federal Court and the Executive arm led by the Prime Minister and his appointed Cabinet members. It contains specific provisions which safeguards the interest of all Malaysians. This section highlights specific provisions within the Federal Constitution which upholds equality and non-discrimination.

#### **Article 3**

- 1) Islam is the religion of the Federation; but other religions may be practiced in peace and harmony in any part of the Federation.

#### **Article 4**

- 1) This Constitution is the **supreme law of the Federation** and any law passed after Merdeka Day which is inconsistent with this Constitution shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void.

#### **Article 8**

- 1) All persons are equal before the law and entitled to the equal protection of the law.
- 2) Except as expressly authorised by this Constitution there shall be no discrimination against citizens on the ground only of religion, race, descent or place of birth in any law or in the appointment to any office or employment under a public authority or in the administration of any law relating to the acquisition holding or disposition of property or the establishing or carrying on of any trade, business, profession, vocation or employment
- 3) There shall be no discrimination in favour of a person on the ground that he is a subject of the Rule, of any State.
- 4) No public authority shall discriminate against any person on the ground that he is resident or carrying or business in any part of the Federation outside the jurisdiction of the authority.

**Article 12**

- 1) Without prejudice to the generality of Article 8, there shall be no discrimination against any citizen on the grounds only of religion, race, descent or place of birth –
  - a) in the administration of any educational institution maintained by a public authority, and, in particular, the admission of pupils or students or the payment of fees; or
  - b) in providing out of the funds of a public authority financial aid for the maintenance or education of pupils or students in any educational institution (whether or not maintained by a public authority and whether within or outside the Federation).
- 2) Every religious group has the right to establish and maintain institutions for the education of children in its own religion, and there shall be no discrimination on the ground only of religion in any law relating to such institutions or in the administration of any such law; but it shall be lawful for the Federation or a State to establish or maintain or assist in establishing or maintaining Islamic institutions or provide or assist in providing instruction in the religion of Islam and incur such expenditure as may be necessary for the purpose.

**Article 153**

- (1) It shall be the responsibility of the Yang di-Pertuan Agong to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and the legitimate interests of other communities in accordance with the provisions of this Article.
- (2) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, but subject to the provisions of Article 40 and of this Article, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong shall exercise his functions under this Constitution and federal law in such manner as may be necessary to safeguard the special position of the Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak and to ensure the reservation for Malays and natives of any of the States of Sabah and Sarawak of such proportion as he may deem reasonable of positions in the public service (other than the public service of a State) and of scholarships, exhibitions and other similar educational or training privileges or special facilities given or accorded by the Federal Government and, when any permit or licence for the operation of any trade or business is required by federal law, then, subject to the provisions of that law and this Article, of such permits and licences.
- (7) Nothing in this Article shall operate to deprive or authorize the deprivation of any person of any right, privilege, permit or licence accrued to or enjoyed or held by him or to authorize a refusal to renew to any person any such permit or licence or a refusal to grant to the heirs, successors or assigns of a person any permit or licence when the renewal or grant might reasonably be expected in the ordinary course of events.

## National Principles (Rukun Negara)

The National Principles (Rukun Negara) was introduced on 31 August 1970 by the Malaysian Government to celebrate the 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the nation's independence.

Its inception as a national ideology was deemed as a needed response to the "13 May" incident in 1969, following the general election in Malaysia. The outbreak of riots had resulted in the creation of the National Operations Council (Majlis Gerakan Negara) to restore peace and stability to Malaysia till 1971. Subsequently, the Rukun Negara was utilized to forge national unity among the citizens primarily through instilling its values and principles through education in schools. Presently, this ideology has become a guiding principle to encourage racial harmony and mutual respect.

In the **Preamble** of the National Principles, Malaysia nurtures the ambitions of:

- Achieving a more perfect unity amongst the whole of her society;
- Preserving a democratic way of life;
- Creating a just society where the prosperity of the country can be enjoyed together in a fair and equitable manner;
- Guaranteeing a liberal approach towards our traditional heritage that is rich and diverse
- Building a progressive society that will make use of science and modern technology.

## **Core Values**

WE, residents of Malaysia, pledge our united efforts to attain these ends guided by these principles:

- BELIEF IN GOD (Kepercayaan kepada Tuhan)
- LOYALTY TO KING AND COUNTRY (Kesetiaan kepada Raja dan Negara)
- SUPREMACY OF THE CONSTITUTION (Keluhuran Perlembagaan)
- RULE OF LAW (Kedaulatan Undang-Undang)
- COURTESY AND MORALITY (Kesopanan dan kesusilaan)

## 27. International and Regional Human Rights Standards

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations.

#### **Article 2**

*Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedom set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any limitation of sovereignty.*

#### **Article 7**

*All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.*

#### **Article 18**

*Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.*

#### **Article 22**

*Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.*

#### **Article 26 (2)**

*Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedom. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.*

#### **Article 27 (1)**

*Everyone has the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.*

## ASEAN Human Rights Declaration

Malaysia as a Member State of ASEAN had reaffirmed her adherence to the purposes and principles of ASEAN as enshrined in the ASEAN Charter, in particular the respect for an promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the principles of democracy, the rule of law and good governance. In doing so, Malaysia has agreed to uphold the general principles which addresses the issues of racism and racial discrimination.

### **Provision 2**

*Every person is entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth herein, without distinction of any kind, such as race, gender, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic status, birth, disability or other status.*

### **Provision 3**

*Every person has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law. Every person is equal before the law. Every person is entitled without discrimination to equal protection of the law.*

### **Provision 9**

*In the realization of the human rights and freedoms contained in this Declaration, the principles of impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity, non-discrimination, non- confrontation and avoidance of double standards and politicization, should always be upheld. The process of such realization shall take into account peoples' participation, inclusivity and the need for accountability.*

### **Provision 22**

*Every person has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. All forms of intolerance, discrimination and incitement of hatred based on religion and beliefs shall be eliminated.*

### **Provision 31 (3)**

*Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of his or her dignity. Education shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms in ASEAN Member States. Furthermore, education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in their respective societies, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups, and enhance the activities of ASEAN for the maintenance of peace.*

### Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)

Malaysia together with 192 other world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) at the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 25 September 2015. This is a **global commitment towards a more sustainable, resilient and inclusive development**, with 17 SDGs and 169 targets. Malaysia has put in place an enabling environment to embrace and implement the 17 SDGs in a systematic and measurable manner. The following outlines the Goals that aim to promote inclusivity and equal opportunity.

#### **Goal 10 – Reduced Inequality Within and Among Countries**

##### **SDG Target 10.2**

*By 2030, empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status*

##### **SDG Target 10.3**

*Ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard*

# Glossary

3R	Race, Religion and the Royal Institution
AD	Anti-Discrimination
AICHR	ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BMF	Buy Muslim First
BERSATU	Parti Pribumi Bersatu Malaysia (Malaysian Indigenous Unity Party)
CRC	Child Rights Convention
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAP	Democratic Action Party
FC	Federal Constitution
FOE	Freedom of Expression
FORB	Freedom of Religion or Belief
HRC	Human Rights Council
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
IP	Indigenous Peoples
MADANI	keMampanan (sustainability), kesejAhteraan (prosperity), Daya cipta (innovation), hormAt (respect), keyakiNan (trust) and Ihsan (compassion)
	The slogan used by the current government under the stewardship of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, used to refer to this government's tenure.
MCMC	Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission
MP	Member of Parliament
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia

OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAS	<i>Parti Islam Se-Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Islamic Party)
SUHAKAM	<i>Suruhanjaya Hak Asasi Manusia Malaysia</i> (Human Rights Commission of Malaysia)
SUKMA	<i>Sukan Malaysia</i> (Malaysian Games)
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNHRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
YB	<i>Yang Berhormat</i> (Honorable)

# About Pusat KOMAS

Pusat KOMAS (KOMAS) is a civil society organisation (CSO) dedicated to human rights. KOMAS' with a primary focus on advocating against racism and racial discrimination in Malaysia while also supporting marginalised communities, particularly the Orang Asli, in advocating for their land rights. Established in 1993, Pusat KOMAS is now a 32-year-old organisation.

Since 2005, KOMAS has actively promoted equality and the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination in Malaysia. KOMAS employs the Popular Communication Methodologies in its activities such as workshops, forums and conferences. KOMAS has also produced films and publications as tools to promote social cohesion and national unity in Malaysia.

Key initiatives include the [annual Malaysia Racism Report \(formerly Malaysia Racial Discrimination Report\)](#) and [various research papers](#). KOMAS has also drafted [inclusive policy proposals](#) for the governments to adopt. The [short films produced by KOMAS](#), used extensively during workshops and trainings, are also used by our CSO partners and state governments as evidence-based tools for addressing grassroots challenges to promote an equitable and just society.

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, KOMAS has been engaging with federal, state and local governments, while also conducting dialogues with civil servants and government agencies to raise awareness on addressing inequality among minorities and marginalized communities. This effort aims to align Malaysia with other ASEAN countries that have ratified ICERD.

Pusat KOMAS actively supports various Indigenous communities, raising awareness and empowering them on their basic human rights and ancestral land rights. KOMAS supports the Network of Indigenous Peoples' Villages in Peninsular Malaysia (*Jaringan Kampung Orang Asli Semenanjung Malaysia*, JKOASM), a community-based network advocating for their ancestral land rights and self-determination at grassroots and higher levels. This relationship, established in 1995, includes training in facilitation, community leadership, and other skills to complement their advocacy efforts. KOMAS also serves as a bridge between communities and government ministries or agencies.



The Malaysia Racism Report is an annual initiative by Pusat KOMAS, which began in 2015. The report reflects a concentrated effort in documenting instances of racism and racial discrimination found in media and reports that Pusat KOMAS has received from the public throughout the year.

Want to contribute? Report to us here:



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