



ANNUAL REPORT

2021



“ A Malaysia that upholds the principles of liberty and justice ”



Photo by Bari Abikar on Unsplash

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**YAM Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin
ibni Tuanku Muhriz**
Founding President of IDEAS

Message from Founding President

The ongoing transition of Covid-19 from being pandemic to endemic has seen all areas of life gradually return to resembling a period before the virus. For those in the fields of research and advocacy, being able to confer with colleagues physically and attend networking events again has served as a tremendous morale booster; even if working from home will now always be embedded into our work culture - partly thanks to the many innovations spurred on by the Movement Control Orders last year.

Having said that, we must never forget the enormous sacrifices made by so many at the height of pandemic. This includes members of the IDEAS team, some of whom contracted Covid themselves, or sadly lost loved ones to the virus. Despite these hardships, I am proud that IDEAS played a small role in helping to raise two million ringgit towards equipment needed by Covid hospitals. Often, actually navigating the complexities of such initiatives provides important insights into how policies and procedures can help or hinder the actual delivery of goods and services to the people who need them.

In the long-term, the lessons learnt from this worldwide pandemic must also be applied in how we think about policymaking at all levels to prevent future public health crises.

At the local level this might refer to coordination between health and law enforcement agencies; at the state level it might be the autonomy to make decisions about spending on public health; at the national level it might be education (and fighting disinformation) on vaccines; and at the regional level it might be pooling efforts to acquire and distribute vaccines. The most ambitious ask is at the global level, to think holistically about planetary health to prevent the formation of such viruses in the first place, as science increasingly shows the links between climate change, human activity and the emergence of viruses.

The above list may seem like a luxury compared to the short-term challenges felt by many Malaysians today. The economic outlook remains uncertain, and the political situation feels precarious, although stability has been helped by royal pronouncements and a cross-party Memorandum of Understanding which has even managed to deliver political reforms long requested by civil society organisations.

Within this context, IDEAS has continued to engage with stakeholders from all parties from across the political spectrum, the civil service, various economic sectors, the diplomatic corps and the rakyat at large to ensure that the vision of a Malaysia that upholds the principles of liberty and justice continues to resonate across our pillars

of Democracy & Governance, Economics & Business, Public Finance, and Social Policy.

As ever, it is only with robust research and honest advocacy that research-based policymaking can triumph over the whims of personality-based politics and short-term populist sentiment.

To all donors, sponsors and supporters who continue to share this belief, thank you.

YAM Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin ibni Tuanku Muhriz
March 2022



Tricia Yeoh

Chief Executive Officer
(CEO) of IDEAS

Message from CEO

We entered 2021 thinking that the challenges of 2020 would no longer befall us. Instead, Malaysians were subjected to a more tumultuous year than the one before: an even more prolonged economic lockdown, worsening COVID-19 conditions, and Parliamentary suspension amid a political crisis. Yet despite this gloomy backdrop, IDEAS continued to demonstrate its resilience, productivity and relevance.

In 2021, our **revenues increased further by 17.6%** and we received **1407 media mentions** worth **RM 38.8 million** in PR value. We completed **14 projects, 16 policy papers and reports** and **conducted 25 events** throughout the year. The team has worked hard, striving to make a difference in how Malaysia approaches public policy.

Significantly, we contributed to important policy discourse in a number of ways. We strongly advocated and built bipartisan support for transparency in political financing, so crucial in addressing political corruption in Malaysia, and to this end aim at forming an All-Party Parliamentary Group on Political Financing in 2022, with the support of the Speaker of Parliament. The Ministry of Finance's inaugural Pre-Budget Statement ahead of Budget 2022 was conducted after consultations with IDEAS; indeed, we had been calling for this for many years prior. We also continued to engage with the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and relevant stakeholders on the crucial matter of Malaysia's ratification of the CPTPP: how pursuing this would bring upon greater economic benefits, whilst also exploring its challenges.

Our policy research delved deep into examining topics of crucial interest to all Malaysians: We published three long papers in conjunction with the New Economic Policy (NEP)'s 50th Anniversary, which propose new ways of dealing with race-based affirmative action policy. Our research on Bumiputera procurement also recommended how small Bumiputera contractors can stand to gain economically from better, more transparent policy and implementation.

Finally, 2021 saw the IDEAS team successfully launching several new civic tech platforms as an innovative way of presenting policy solutions. This year alone, we published 5 separate online platforms, including Pantau Kuasa (monitoring political appointments in Federal Statutory Bodies), BRI Monitor (that monitors Belt and Road Initiative projects in the region), Kita Bukan Kami (with videos and infographics on improving race relations, towards the ratification of ICERD), a new ASEAN Prosperity Initiative (API) website that collates all API research and advocacy materials, and Sekolah Kita (promoting our research on Orang Asli children's challenges in accessing education).

We worked closely in the past year on collaborations with partners. Together with other civil society organisations, we were part of coalitions such as Pilihanraya Tanpa Rasuah (with Rasuah Busters) and the Seed Community for a Professional Parliament (with Bersih and other CSOs). Collectively, we voiced objections to the suspension of Parliament and called for significant institutional reforms in improving anti-corruption efforts. Finally, we worked with CSO partners at the subnational level to improve governance within states.

IDEAS will continue to play the role of an independent platform, bringing stakeholders together from all layers of society and various quarters. We are continually grateful to all donors, sponsors, partners, policymakers, government representatives and friends for the tremendous support you have given.

Here's to an even better and stronger year ahead in 2022.

Tricia Yeoh
February 2022



About IDEAS

The Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) is a nonprofit research institute based in Malaysia dedicated to promoting solutions to public policy challenges. IDEAS' vision is:

“A Malaysia that upholds the principles of liberty and justice”

Our mission at IDEAS is to improve the level of understanding and acceptance of public policies based on the principles of rule of law, limited government, competitive markets and free individuals. Our work is independent of vested interests and partisan influences. We have also expanded our work into new areas focusing on our three overarching missions – advancing a competitive economy, ensuring trust in institutions and promoting an inclusive Malaysia. We act as an intellectual centre creating space for cross partisan principles-centric and results-oriented dialogue.

We achieve this by:

- Publishing cutting-edge research work
- Initiating dialogues with government, lawmakers, businesses and civil society
- Providing thought leadership
- Facilitating networking between like-minded individuals
- Organising educational programmes

We are grateful to our donors and funders throughout 2021. None of the achievements would be possible without their support. If you would like to support us, please email Tricia Yeoh at tricia@ideas.org.my

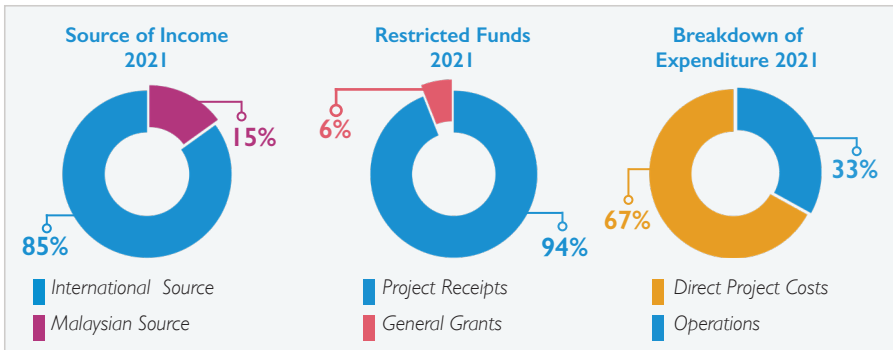
Financial Overview

During this financial year (**Oct 2020 – Sept 2021**) we raised **RM 3,547,069**. From this, RM 533,640 (15%) was raised from local sources, while RM 3,013,429 (85%) was from abroad. RM 3,345,919 (94%) was funds restricted to specific projects, leaving only RM 201,150 (6%) for core operational costs and urgent initiatives.



Total expenditure for the financial year was RM 3,592,940. This comprised of direct expenses of RM 2,409,540 and total operating expenditures of RM 1,183,400. This leaves a net deficit of RM 16,551. At the end of the financial year, our total assets were RM 1,274,603 and total liabilities were RM 854,887.

The full audited financial report is available from our website.



Thank you to all our funders and sponsors who have supported us. This includes the European Union, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF), Malaysian Reform Initiative (MARI), the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), Sanofi-Aventis (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd. and National Democratic Institute. We would also like to thank the more than 20 Malaysian companies and individuals who have supported us in 2021.



9 Polycys
4 Briefs
3 Reports
= 16 Total of publications



RM 38.8 million
PR Value Generated
3.88% increase from
2020 (RM 37.35 million)



1,407 Mentions/
Appearances
10.04% decrease
from 2020 (1,564)



25
conferences, forums,
seminars, workshops
and online events



4,678
LinkedIn followers
48.2%
increase from
2020 (3,157)



Our Achievements



5,227
Instagram followers
31.9%
increase from
2020 (3,962)



14,736
Twitter followers
11.6% increase from
2020 (13,210)



13,031 Facebook
followers
5% increase from
2020 (12,415)



5,605
Newsletter subscribers
0.53% increase from
2020 (5,575)



12,744 Facebook likes
6.34% increase from
2020 (11,936)

Our People

Board of Directors:

- YAM Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin ibni Tuanku Muhriz
- Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria
- Wan Mohd Firdaus Wan Mohd Fuaad
- Christopher Leong
- Dato' Dr. R. Thillainathan
- YM Datin Sri Lara Hussein

Advisory Council:

- Tan Sri Mohamed Nazir bin Tun Abdul Razak
- Datuk Dr Anis Yusaf Yusoff

Senior Fellows:

- Dr. Carmelo Ferlito (*Economics & Housing*)
- Prof. Fatimah Mohamed Arshad (*Food Security*)
- Assistant Prof. Dr. Renato Lima de Oliveira (*Energy*)
- Dr. Jayant Menon (*Trade & Regional Integration*)
- Dr. Lee Hwok Aun (*Development Economics*)
- Prof. Dr. Fatimah Kari (*Poverty*)

Team:

- Tricia Yeoh (*CEO*)
- Mazrina Arifin (*Director, Finance*)
- Juita Mohamad (*Director, Economics and Business Unit & Acting Research Director*)
- Zokhri Idris, Ph.D (*Director, External Relations*)

- Sri Murniati (*Deputy Research Director*)
- Aira Azhari (*Senior Manager, Research*)
- Alissa Marianne Rode (*Manager, Research*)
- Amir Ridzuan Jamaludin (*Manager, Programme Secretariat*)
- Ahmad Bashier Muhammad Afifi (*Assistant Manager, Finance*)
- Amelia Ramli (*Senior Administrator*)
- Norhayati Murni Misran (*Senior Graphic Designer*)
- Faiz Zaidi (*Senior Executive, Programme Secretariat*)
- Julia Merican (*Senior Executive, Research*)
- Jazreen Harith Jefri (*Senior Executive, Research*)
- Halmie Azrie Abdul Halim (*Executive, Research*)
- Imran Shamsunahar (*Executive, Research*)
- Low Zhen Ting (*Executive, Research*)
- Muhammad Arieff Najmuddin Mohd Mohtar (*Executive, Research*)
- Kirjane Ngu (*Executive, Research*)
- Muhamad Zuhdi Farhan Suhaimi (*Executive, External Relations*)
- Jivinyaa Selvaraju (*Executive, External Relations*)
- Salsabila Abdul Manan (*Executive, Programme Secretariat*)
- Amal Aziz (*Finance Assistant, Finance*)
- Mohd Safrizal bin Sudin (*Driver*)

Board of Directors



YAM Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin ibni Tuanku Muhriz

In 2006, Tunku Zain Al-'Abidin co-founded the Malaysia Think Tank which evolved into the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS). Today, he is known to be the Founding President of IDEAS; a Trustee of Yayasan Chow Kit, Yayasan Munarah, the Jeffrey Cheah Foundation and the Genovasi Foundation; an Independent Non-Executive Director of Allianz Malaysia Berhad and Kian Joo Can Factory Berhad; an advisor or patron to numerous educational and musical organisations; a committee member of several societies; a columnist under #abidinideas in three newspapers (The Star, Sin Chew and Borneo Post) and a Royal Fellow of the National University of Malaysia.



Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Rebecca Fatima Sta Maria

Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Rebecca Fatima Sta. Maria was appointed Chairman of the Board of Directors at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) on 16 November 2017. She was Secretary General of the Malaysian Ministry of International Trade and Industry from 2010 to 2016. In this role, she provided oversight for the formulation and implementation of Malaysia's international trade policies and positions. This involved Malaysia's participation in bilateral, regional (ASEAN, APEC, OIC) and multilateral (World Trade Organisation) fora. She also provided oversight for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) negotiations and other bilateral and regional Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), including the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).



Wan Mohd Firdaus Wan Mohd Fuaad

Wan Mohd Firdaus is the Founding Director of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS). He is the Country Head (Malaysia) at FNZ. Firdaus was the Country Head (Malaysia) at Fundnel, Advisor at Catcha Group and presently Independent Director at Catcha Digital Berhad. Prior to that he was Vice President, Corporate and Investment Banking at J.P. Morgan. He was also previously the Non-Independent Director of Kulim Berhad, Damansara Realty Berhad and Damansara Asset Berhad. He started his career as Special Officer to the Menteri Besar of Johor attached to the Iskandar Regional Development Authority (IRDA) and Johor Corporation.



Christopher Leong

Christopher Leong is a member of the Board of Directors at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS). He is an advocate and solicitor of the High Court in Malaya for more than 27 years. He has extensive experience in the fields of corporate and commercial litigation, shareholders' disputes, banking litigation and insolvency. Christopher is well-versed with issues that customarily arise in litigation with cross-border elements. Additionally, he practices in the area of constitutional and administrative law, and public interest litigation.



Dato' Dr. R. Thillainathan

Dato' Dr. Thillainathan is a member of the Board of Directors at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS). He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Economics from the University of Malaya in 1968 and a Master and Doctorate of Economics from the London School of Economics later on. He was an Associate Professor at the University of Malaya (UM) from 1977 to 1979 and President of the Malaysian Economic Association (MEA) from 1996 to 2002. He is also a Fellow at the Institute of Bankers Malaysia.



YM Datin Sri Lara Hussein

YM Datin Sri Lara Hussein is a member of the Board of Directors at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS). She also sits on the Board of Trustees for Yayasan Tunku Abdul Rahman. Coming from a political economics background, Lara ventured into the advertising industry by sheer chance. She played key roles in Bates and Y&R before starting Brand Energy, a creative consultancy company handling an array of global names such as Shell, Cadbury, and Procter & Gamble. In 2003, Lara joined the M&C Saatchi network, setting up the Kuala Lumpur office into one of the most sought-after agencies in the world.

Advisory Council



Tan Sri Mohamed Nazir bin Tun Abdul Razak

Nazir Razak is currently the Chairman of an ASEAN private equity firm, Ikhlas Capital. He retired as Chairman of CIMB Group in October 2018 after a 29-year career with the ASEAN banking group.

He started his career in CIMB's corporate advisory department in 1989, and he then served the merchant bank in various capacities before being appointed as Group CEO in 1999. After 15 years as Group CEO, Nazir became non-executive Chairman in 2014.

He spearheaded the Group's transformation from a mid-sized Malaysian merchant bank into an ASEAN universal bank. Today CIMB is Malaysia's second-largest and ASEAN's fifth-largest financial services group by assets. CIMB Group is also a world leader in Islamic finance and ASEAN's largest investment bank.



Datuk Dr. Anis Yusal Yusoff

Datuk Dr. Anis Yusal Yusoff is currently Principal Research Fellow at the Institute of Ethnic Studies (KITA), The National University of Malaysia. He was until 24th July 2020, the Deputy Director General of the National Centre for Governance, Integrity & Anti-Corruption (GIACC) at the Prime Minister's Department. Prior to that, he was the Director General of the National Integrity and Good Governance Department, Malaysia. He has also served as President and Chief Executive Officer of the Malaysian Institute of Integrity (INTEGRITI) between 2015-2018.

Datuk Dr. Anis Yusal Yusoff has spent more than ten years with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) between 1994-2005 including a stint with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Headquarters in Bonn, Germany. He was the Assistant Resident Representative and Head of Programme and responsible for Human Development and Governance programme activities of UNDP Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam and was Programme Specialist responsible for UNV in the CIS Region.

Senior Fellows



Dr. Lee Hwok Aun (*Development Economics*)

Dr. Lee Hwok Aun is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS) and ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, Singapore.

He was previously a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Development Studies at the University of Malaya. He has researched and published works on affirmative action, discrimination, inequality, social protection, labour and education, with a focus on Malaysia, as well as comparative study vis-à-vis South Africa and Southeast Asia.

In the year 2021, Dr. Lee Hwok Aun authored a total of two publications for projects undertaken by IDEAS. One of these reports covered the subject of pro-Bumiputera policies within public procurement and the other, of the achievements and shortfalls of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in conjunction with its 50th anniversary since conception in 1969.



Professor Fatimah Mohamed Arshad (*Food Security*)

Professor Fatimah Mohamed Arshad is a Senior Fellow under the Social Policy Unit at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS).

She is a research fellow at the Institute of Agricultural and Food Policy Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia specializing in agricultural marketing and policy analyses. She has carried out various policy research studies, particularly on the role of agricultural subsidies and incentives in the paddy and rice industry, farm management, food security, agricultural cooperatives, food supply chain and marketing, price analyses and forecasting and commodity and agricultural sector modelling.

Her report as part of IDEAS' project on Agricultural Subsidies in 2021 featured a paper consisting of a policy roadmap that further develop insights into the issues of achieving food security as well as clarifying and designing policy options for the benefit of stakeholders in the agriculture industry.



Dr. Jayant Menon (*Trade & Regional Integration*)

Dr. Jayant Menon is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS). He holds adjunct appointments with the Australian National University, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom and Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace and has served on the Advisory Boards of the University of Nottingham Campus in Malaysia and at the Cambodia Development Resource Institute.

He has also worked on several editorial boards, including the Journal of Asian Economics, Asian Economic Journal, Journal of Asia-Pacific Economy, and Journal of Southeast Asian Economies. Dr. Jayant Menon has authored or co-authored more than one hundred academic publications, mostly on trade and development particularly related to Asia. He is regularly involved in many of IDEAS' work as a discussant and roundtable speaker. He also authors IDEAS' ASEAN Prosperity Initiative (API) annual report that occurs yearly.



Dr. Carmelo Ferlito (*Economics & Housing*)

Dr. Carmelo Ferlito is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS). He earned his Master's in Economics in 2003 and a Ph.D. in Economic History in 2007 from the University of Verona in Italy. Between 2013 and 2019, he taught Microeconomic Theory and Policy and History of Economic Thought at INTI International College Subang (Subang Jaya) and at Universiti Kuala Lumpur-MFI (Bangi).

His research activity is devoted to further expand free market economics as taught by the Austrian School of Economics, with particular reference to business cycle analysis, capital theory and entrepreneurship. He has applied his theoretical analysis to policy studies, in particular to the Malaysian property market and housing policies and to the issues of financial literacy, cost of living and agricultural policies. Dr. Carmelo continues to give remarks on housing and economic issues on behalf of IDEAS.



Assistant Prof. Dr. Renato Lima de Oliveira (Energy)

Dr. Renato Lima de Oliveira is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs (IDEAS). He received his Ph.D. in Political Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He holds a M.A. in Latin American Studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) and completed his undergraduate studies at the Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE), where he earned a B.A. in Communication. He is also a research affiliate at the MIT Industrial Performance Center (IPC).

Dr. Renato is an Assistant Professor of Management at the Asia School of Business (ASB) where his main expertise lies in the political economy of development and state-business relations, particularly in the areas of industrial and innovation policies and government accountability. He is also avidly involved in many of IDEAS' energy policy work over the years.



Prof. Dr. Fatimah Kari (Poverty)

Professor Dr. Fatimah Kari earned her Bachelor's degree from the National University of Malaysia (UKM), her Master of Economics from the University of Leicester, UK and her PhD (Economics) from Mississippi State University, United States. She is formerly the director of the Centre for Poverty and Development Studies (CPDS) at the University of Malaya (UM).

She has published and presented many scholarly papers in the area of Environment and Poverty, Poverty Indexing and Environment and Growth. She has also been a consultant for several consultancy projects sponsored by the Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change (MESTECC), Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources (KATS) and Economic Planning Unit, Prime Ministers Department, UNDP, Malaysia, Johor Corporation and Ministry of Communication and Multimedia, Malaysia.



Photo by Arnaud Jaegers on Unsplash

DEMOCRACY & GOVERNANCE

Ensuring Trust in Institutions

Transparent and accountable governance is at the bedrock of every modern, mature and vibrant democracy. The Democracy and Governance Unit works with politicians and civil society at both the federal and state levels to raise awareness and support for the structures and systems that Malaysia needs to restore trust in our government and institutions.

Building bipartisan support for transparency in political financing

In 2021 we continued working with young people across all political parties on the need for transparency in how political parties raise and spend money. We organised four virtual workshops with 116 youth wing leaders from 14 states. In total, we had participants from 11 political parties who supported transparency in funding sources and spending, the need for MPs and ADUNs to focus on policymaking, transparency in businesses and assets owned by political parties and a fairer distribution of constituency development funds. The report we produced from the workshops was distributed amongst MPs, ADUNs, government agencies and civil society. We also published two policy papers that outline the current gaps and reforms that are needed.



Promoting and strengthening sub-national accountability in Malaysia

Building upon our work on monitoring the national budget through the Open Budget Survey, we began collaborating with CSOs at the state level to introduce transparency and accountability in the formation of state budgets and state-level infrastructure projects. The CSOs and individuals we are working with come from seven states. Our work will culminate in the publication of a website and report that showcase the budget and infrastructure documents for all 13 states in Malaysia. We hope to spark greater scrutiny and conversation on the transparency and accountability of state governments.

Promoting national unity and inter-racial harmony

In 2021, we continued promoting our work on national unity and inter-racial harmony as the project entered its public engagement phase through its digital communications campaign. A series of videos using social experiments by The Fourth, 60 sets of in-depth infographics exploring Malaysia's history, insightful roundtables with influential stakeholders and lawmakers, as well as several webinars on race relations and national identity. With our partners Architects of Diversity, we held five online workshops on discrimination and intersectionality. Our partners Imagined Malaysia designed a handbook on the roadmap towards national unity which we will launch in 2022. Lastly, we secured meetings with the Deputy Minister of National Unity and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who were both supportive of our campaign.



Rangka Kerja Antarabangsa dan Kepelbagaian

Perkara 7 Persekitaran Antarabangsa: Penghasilan Segala Bentuk Diskriminasi Rasis (Persekitaran) memberikan suatu rangka kerja yang terpadu dalam menghasilkan perubahan.

Dengan mengiktiraf nilai kepelbagaian, justifikasi rasional, pengiktirafan kepelbagaian **ketuhanan, antarabangsa** adalah penerangan pengiktirafan undang-undang dan nilai, budaya, pengajaran, pendidikan, budaya, dan maklumat.

Hal ini memberi tekanan kepada kita untuk memastikan pengiktirafan ini berlaku dalam masyarakat.

Catatan: Artikel 15 juga mengiktirafkan kepelbagaian budaya, tradisi, kumpulan bangsa, adat istiadat, agama, dan kepercayaan dalam **yang saling menghormati dan menghormati**.



#MudahKerani #TanpaDiskriminasi

6



Educating the Public on Parliamentary Processes

The government change and political instability that plagued Malaysia in 2021 resulted in an increased interest to learn about parliamentary democracy. IDEAS held a series of Bengkel Kenali Parlimen Anda (Know Your Parliament Workshops) that aimed to educate the Malaysian public on the procedural practises and protocol of the Parliament. The four workshop sessions in August and September 2021 were conducted by two esteemed trainers, Maha Balakrishnan and Idzuafi Hadi Kamilan. We received an overwhelming response with 130 participants from different backgrounds interested in learning more about the importance of Parliament as an institution in a democratic country.



Photo by Falaq Lazuardi on Unsplash

ECONOMICS & BUSINESS

Advancing a Competitive Economy

Given the negative impacts of the pandemic there is an urgency to understand the degree of these impacts on the government, private institutions/businesses, households and local and international investors. Therefore public policy needs to be developed to soften the negative impacts on these groups in the medium term, through evidence-based policy research. The work focus of the unit is on how selected groups can effectively move forward as part of the recovery plan, in a post pandemic setting, looking at both micro and macro-economic challenges faced by the country.

Promoting economic integration in ASEAN

IDEAS continues our work on ASEAN integration. This year we looked at diverse topics including ensuring food security in ASEAN, taking a look at the ASEAN Power Grid, on the impact of digital economy and sustainable development. We also revamped our microsite to compile all ASEAN related work in one place. Over the past year, the ASEAN Prosperity Initiative (API) project produced a series of infographics, podcasts, videos and hosted webinars on the aforementioned topics, which are crucial in our understanding of the ASEAN Economic Community and its various developments.



Analysing the impact of corruption on the supply chain

Combatting corruption has been a persistent challenge for Malaysia. Corruption scandals involving the highest levels of public office in recent years have resulted in significant political backlash and public awareness on the cost of corruption in the country. Despite the considerable political attention paid to corruption, however, there is a lack of serious effort to investigate how corruption impacts the cost of living. With this, IDEAS collaborated with the Coalition for Business Integrity (CBI) and published a report titled "Corruption in the Supply Chain: Form and Impact on Consumers" on 22 June 2021. A webinar was held in conjunction with the report launch. The panellists for the event were YB Dr Lee Boon Chye, MP of Gopeng and former Deputy Health Minister; Alex Tan, Partner, Risk Consulting Leader at Price waterhouseCoopers (PwC); R. Nadeswaran, activist and former journalist; Jonson Chong, Core Team at #RasuahBusters; and Dr Haji Mazlan Haji Ahmad, Deputy President of Malaysia Corruption Watch.



Following the report release, we organised briefing sessions with MPs from several parties including AMANAH, PKR, and Pejuang.

CPTPP

In 2021, we continued to carry out public advocacy and stimulate public discourse on the issue of CPTPP ratification in Malaysia. In 2020, IDEAS had completed its Economic Impact Assessment on the benefits accruing to Malaysia should both

Malaysia and Taiwan ratify the multilateral agreement. Last year, we carried out a series of stakeholder and public engagements on the subject including roundtable discussions, public forums, infographics and government consultations. Throughout our advocacy campaign, IDEAS had engaged various stakeholders including local industry players, business chambers, grassroots organisations and policy experts. We worked closely with the Ministry of International Trade and Industry in identifying key areas that Malaysia could benefit from as a result of CPTPP ratification, as well as studied potential challenges that could be faced, with commensurate mitigation measures.



OPENING REMARKS



Yusef Teoh
CEO, IDEAS Institute

MODERATOR



Dr. Zakir Hossain
Managing Director, IDEAS Institute

PANELISTS



Anindya Arinichu
Senior Advisor, Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Malaysia



Dr. John McFarland
Senior Policy Advisor, IDEAS Institute



Khairul Anwar
Senior Advisor, IDEAS Institute





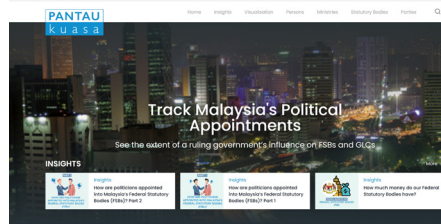
PUBLIC FINANCE

Building a transparent and accountable Malaysia

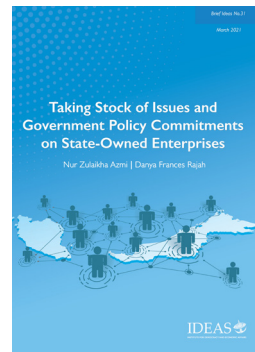
Sound fiscal management is the backbone of all policymaking. IDEAS continues its commitment to promoting public understanding of the way the rakyat's money should be used and accounted for. The Public Finance Unit advocates for good governance principles in fiscal management, procurement and state-owned entities.

Monitoring political appointments and reform progress of the State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)

The first step in accountability is to make power and its effects visible. To that end, we launched the Pantau Kuasa website (www.pantaukuasa.com), which provides visual insights on the number of political appointments made in federal statutory bodies (FSBs). The website currently displays political appointees and their party affiliations in previous the last Barisan Nasional administration, Pakatan Harapan and Perikatan Nasional administrations. We plan to expand the database further to cover political appointees in subsidiaries of these statutory bodies (GLCs) and political appointees of FSBs in the Ismail Sabri's administration. Pantau Kuasa will also be a platform for continuous civic engagement with journalists and the public on good governance and guarding against political influence in statutory bodies and government linked companies.



IDEAS continues to build its regional presence in this field by participating in the OECD's 14th Meeting of the Asia-Pacific Network on Corporate Governance of SOEs. Senior Manager Sri Murniati Yusuf was invited to speak on the SOEs' Disclosure Requirements and Practices in Malaysia with the meeting's attendees. We also published a policy brief on the government's policy commitments on State-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the National Anti-Corruption Plan (NACP) and the Shared Prosperity Vision (SPV) 2030, which outlined the government's plans for improving SOE governance.



Strengthening demand for budget transparency

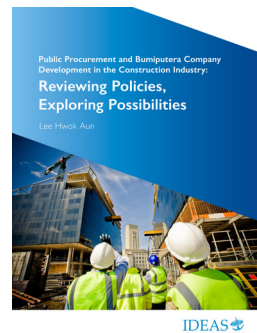
We have made progress in our advocacy for budget transparency over the years. IDEAS has often called for stronger pre-budget consultations, and for the first time, the Ministry of Finance responded by publishing the Pre-Budget statement and four Budget Consultation Papers in 2021. These documents inform stakeholder consultations in the process of preparing the National Budget. MOF's 2022 Fiscal Outlook also cited IDEAS' feedback on the Fiscal Responsibility Act, while IDEAS conducted a focus group discussion on social policy for the 2022 budget which was well-received by stakeholders.

Over the years, we have built a strong partnership with the International Budget Partnership on assessing Malaysia's budget transparency for the Open Budget Survey. We have leveraged on this built-up expertise to design Malaysia's first budget transparency assessment at the state level. The Malaysia State Budget Open Index (MyOBI) will be implemented in the first half of 2022, where we equip civic-minded organisations and individuals to assess the fiscal transparency of each state. We look forward to creating demand-led accountability where citizens take the lead in monitoring how public money is spent.

Continuing our Pantau brand, IDEAS also embarked on Pantau Laksana, a project to provide tools for monitoring of the Economic Stimulus Packages announced during the Covid-19 crisis. We successfully built two datasets encompassing the RM530 billion announced through the 9 separate ESP announcements. These data sets were shared with MPs, journalists, and researchers, culminating in consultation sessions with 16 CSOs on usability of the datasets. We will use this project as a launchpad for further work on making budget data visible to empower the public to monitor fiscal management.

Restarting conversation on Bumiputera Procurement reform

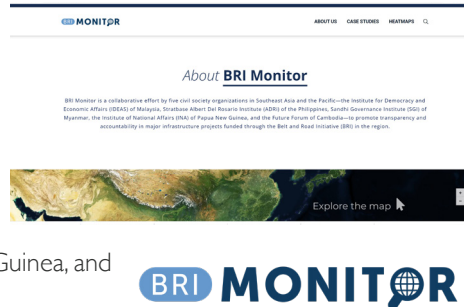
We brought more nuance to the discussion on Bumiputera Procurement and engaged with stakeholders in this area including MOF's procurement division, Pusat Khidmat Kontraktor, and Persatuan Kontraktor Bumiputera. Dr. Lee Hwok Aun, IDEAS Senior Fellow, presented a research paper on the overview and update of pro-Bumiputera policies in public procurement, as well as the findings and implications of an original research project conducted between April and August 2021 to spark the conversation on Bumiputera procurement reform. The research set out to survey and assess the distribution and characteristics of Bumiputera contractors, investigate the effects of public procurement on Bumiputera company development, evaluate the policy, and make recommendations moving forward, while focusing primarily on G1 Bumiputera contractors.



The research, which included quantitative and qualitative data gathered from a variety of sources, has helped to improve our understanding of Bumiputera participation in public procurement and shed light on policy outcomes. The analysis suggests elaborative policy recommendations, but there is still a lot more work to be done. We hope that this study has sparked new debates, provided fresh insights, offered useful questions, and identified new research opportunities.

Pushing for better governance of major foreign-funded infrastructure in ASEAN

We embarked on an ambitious project to promote transparency and accountability in major infrastructure deals funded through China's controversial Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2020. The BRI Monitor (www.brimonitor.org) is a collaborative effort with four other civil society organisations across Southeast Asia and the Pacific: the Stratbase Albert Del Rosario Institute (ADRI) in the Philippines, the Sandhi Governance Institute (SGI) in Myanmar, the Institute of National Affairs (INA) in Papua New Guinea, and Future Forum in Cambodia.



Using qualitative research and an array of in-depth case studies of BRI projects in each of the five partner countries, our initiative aims to provide key insight into the governance gaps in large-scale infrastructure projects with Chinese backing, with the hopes of informing policy advocacy. Each case underwent three vital steps: describing the structure of the project and its background, chief actors, and issues; conducting a transparency assessment in accordance with the Infrastructure Data Standards (IDS) developed by the Construction Sector Transparency Initiative (CoST), and assessing the project's regulatory framework in a regulatory review to evaluate the effectiveness of the project's governance and its consistency with international standards. Each partner country will also supply a written country report condensing the findings from all of their case studies.

We successfully secured funding for this project from the Center for International Private Enterprises (CIPE), an institute of the National Endowment for Democracy that works to uphold and strengthen democracy by creating business-led solutions to social and economic issues. Our hope is that once the BRI Monitor is published in its entirety, it will sow public awareness about the governance gaps and oversights in these case studies, leading to a region-wide call for better management of infrastructure projects on this scale.



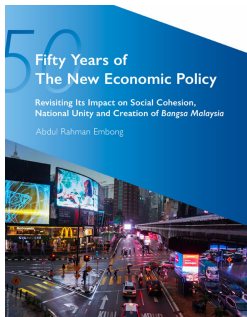
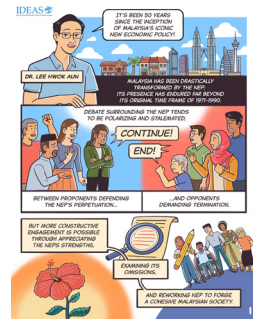
SOCIAL POLICY

Promoting an Inclusive Malaysia

Given the negative impacts of the pandemic, there is an urgency to understand the degree and the nature of these impacts on society and households. Therefore public policy needs to be developed to soften the negative impacts on these groups in the medium term, through evidence-based policy research. The work focus of the unit will be on how vulnerable households, youth and women in particular can effectively move forward as part of the recovery plan, in a post pandemic.

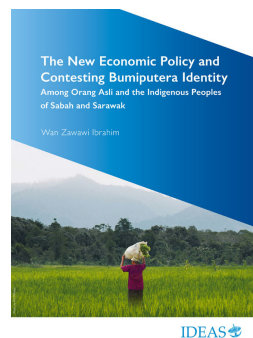
NEP@50

2021 was the 50th Anniversary of the New Economic Policy in Malaysia. The affirmative action policy implemented in 1971 had a far-reaching impact on Malaysia's economic landscape. IDEAS embarked on a research project, resulting in the publication of three reports on the issue. The first report was titled "The New Economic Policy Beyond Fifty: Assessing its Strengths and Weaknesses to Chart a Cohesive Malaysian Society" by Dr Lee Hwok-Aun, IDEAS Senior Fellow. The report aims to stimulate more constructive engagement through re-appreciating the NEP's strengths whilst examining its weaknesses and omissions, grappling with its policy discourses as well as with its popular but misguided perspectives.



The second report, "Fifty Years of The New Economic Policy: Revisiting Its Impact on Social Cohesion, National Unity and Creation of Bangsa Malaysia", written by Dr Abdul Rahman Embong, examines the context from which NEP emerged, and assesses its impact, as well as measures the extent of social cohesion among various ethnic groups.

Prof. Wan Zawawi Ibrahim wrote the third and final report titled "The New Economic Policy and Contesting Bumiputera Identity Among Orang Asli and the Indigenous Peoples of Sabah and Sarawak". This report aims to examine the trajectory of policymaking and identity-making in the context of the NEP and its aftermath. It specifically deals with how it has impacted the identity of indigenous communities, with a focus on the Bumiputera communities - specifically, the Orang Asli of Peninsular Malaysia and the indigenous peoples of Sarawak and Sabah, who have palpably not benefited from the development policies implemented in its name.



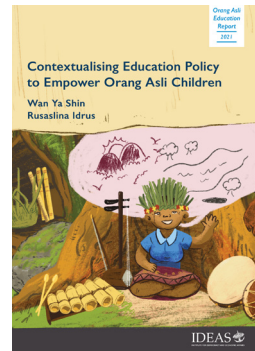
The reports were launched through a series of webinars in Nov 2021.



Barriers to Education faced by Orang Asli Children

The issue of education inequality faced by Orang Asli children has been recognised by the Malaysian government, with various policies and programmes implemented to address the challenges. While progress has been made, this education gap still persists and has been thus far unresolved to any meaningful degree.

IDEAS conducted research on the barriers faced by Orang Asli children in accessing education. The research consisted of primary data collection via interviews as well as analysis of primary data and secondary sources. The result was a report titled "Contextualising Education Policy to Empower Orang Asli Children". The report seeks to identify the underlying challenges that Orang Asli children face in obtaining an education and to understand the implementation and delivery of programmes and assistance provided by the government. The report was written by Wan Ya Shin and Dr Rusaslina Idrus.



The report was launched on 17th December 2021 in conjunction with a webinar. The project continues in 2022 with plans for animated videos and microsite launch.

Impact of COVID-19 on access to healthcare and education for refugee children

The COVID-19 has heavily impacted lives worldwide, more so the vulnerable and marginalised communities. Thus the unit embarked on research to study the impact of COVID-19 on access to healthcare and education for refugee children in Malaysia. We conducted a questionnaire with 84 respondents and interviewed 27 individuals. As of 31 December 2022, the data is being analysed, and a report will be launched in May 2022.



Photo by Fahrul Azmi on Unsplash

This was a year which tested IDEAS' adaptability and also the individual resilience of staff members. We spent more than half of the year working remotely from home. Events had to be moved online; work disruptions managed; quarantines completed with bated breath. As a think tank, we played a role in providing information, perspective and cogent analysis for policy recommendations, in the midst of policy misdirections and political uncertainty as the nation grappled with the COVID-19 pandemic and a fractious Parliament. Despite the challenges, we continued our work on several key issues.

With the continuing COVID-19 crisis, we looked at the impact faced by vulnerable communities such as the Orang Asli in accessing education with the absences of in-person learning. We also started our research on the struggles of the refugee children in accessing healthcare and educational services.

The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred the government into implementing several stimulus packages. With the increased spending, transparency in government spending has become more crucial. To this effect, we conducted a data collection exercise and analysed the stimulus packages with the resulting data set shared with stakeholders such as journalists, MPs and researchers. We also continue to expand our work on Open Budget Survey by collaborating with CSOs at the state level to introduce transparency and accountability in the formation of state budgets and state-level infrastructure projects. The CSOs and individuals we are working with come from seven states. Our work will culminate in the publication of a website and report that showcase the budget and infrastructure documents for all 13 states.

2021 was also the year we managed to achieve progress in the areas of fiscal transparency with MOF agreeing to publish a Pre-Budget statement and consultation paper as per our recommendations.

In 2021, Malaysia recognised the 50th Anniversary of the New Economic Policy (NEP). IDEAS conducted two major research projects related to this. One, is where we reignited the conversation on reforming the Bumiputera Procurement policy. The project, which was led by Dr Lee Hwok-Aun, set out to survey and assess the distribution and characteristics of Bumiputera contractors, investigate the effects of public procurement on Bumiputera company development, evaluate the policy, and make recommendations moving forward. The Social Policy Unit at IDEAS also ran a related project which aims to evaluate the NEP as a whole, looking at its impact on nation building and identity.

2021 is also the year the IDEAS began exploring new ways of presenting our research

and data. It began with the Pantau Kuasa website (www.pantaukuasa.com) which monitors the political appointments in Federal statutory bodies. We hope to be able to expand this project to look at political appointments in GLCs in 2022. These civic tech platforms present IDEAS with exciting new opportunities in communicating the important research and policy work that we do, through novel means.

This was also the year in which IDEAS collaborated intensively with multiple partners and stakeholders nationwide. As underscored in CEO Tricia Yeoh's message, we worked through several coalitions to bring the message of reforms to a much wider and broader audience, chiefly within the Malay-speaking community. Working with an array of organisations that are adept with their own fortes have allowed IDEAS to broaden our reach.

Lastly, looking beyond our borders, we have expanded our regional work. First, in partnership with four other think tanks in the Asia Pacific region, we analysed the transparency of several major Chinese supported infrastructure projects in the region. This culminated with the launch of the BRI Monitor (www.brimonitor.org). We also continued our work in advocating ASEAN economic integration via our ASEAN Prosperity Initiative, where look at different sectors that would benefit from greater integration.

IDEAS continues to shine a spotlight on issues and promote better governance through evidence-based research. The fight for liberty and justice continues on in 2022.



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