

The Influence Industry Voter Data in Malaysia's 2018 Elections

researched and written by
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in partnership with Tactical Technology Collective's
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Personal Data and Political Influence in Malaysia

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Contextualization

The ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) (see Figure 1) has never lost a general election in Malaysia. The race-based coalition comprises 13 component parties and is headed by the United Malays National Organisation (Umno), a Malay nationalist party, whose current president is Najib Razak. Umno presidents have been appointed as all of Malaysia's six prime ministers. The other major BN component parties in Malaysia – a predominantly Malay-Muslim country with significant Chinese and Indian minorities, besides various ethnic groups in the east Malaysia states of Sabah and Sarawak – are the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), Malaysian People's Movement Party (Gerakan), and Sarawak-based Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu (PBB).



Figure 1: Leaders of BN's component parties. Umno president Najib Razak (centre) is flanked by Umno vice president Ahmad Zahid Hamidi (left) and Umno secretary-general Tengku Adnan Tengku Mansor (right). Retrieved from <https://www.barisannasional.org.my/wakil-rakyat/>

Umno is present throughout the country, except in Sarawak that is controlled by the Bumiputera-based PBB. Umno, MCA and MIC restrict membership to Malays, Chinese and Indians respectively. Gerakan places no racial or religious restrictions on its membership, but its membership is predominantly Chinese. BN is a conservative party that can be considered somewhat economically liberal (albeit with explicit pro-Bumiputera economic policies), but practices social conservatism, with restrictions placed on civil liberties like freedom of speech and religious freedom. BN's main ideology is to prioritise Malay rights and Islam. Bumiputera refers to Malays and natives of Sabah and Sarawak. Malaysia comprises 13 states and three federal territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya.



Figure 2: Pakatan Harapan leadership at the launch of their 2018 election manifesto at Shah Alam, Selangor, on March 8 2018. From left: DAP secretary-general Lim Guan Eng, Amanah president Mohamad Sabu, Pakatan Harapan and PPBM chairman Mahathir Mohamad, PKR president Wan Azizah Wan Ismail, PPBM president Muhyiddin Yassin, PKR deputy president Azmin Ali, and Amanah vice president Salahuddin Ayub. Picture by Malay Mail at <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/ph-promises-to-set-up-council-for-national-harmony-in-manifesto>

The main federal Opposition pact is Pakatan Harapan (PH) (see Figure 2), comprising the People's Justice Party (PKR), the Democratic Action Party (DAP), and two new parties – Malaysian United Indigenous Party (PPBM) and National Trust Party (Amanah). PH was formed in 2015 after the break-up of Pakatan Rakyat over disagreements between DAP and Islamist party, Parti Islam Se Malaysia (PAS). Pakatan Rakyat comprising PKR, DAP and PAS was formed shortly after the 2008 general election where the three parties agreed on straight fights against BN, which saw BN lose its parliamentary supermajority for the first time since 1969, as well as five states – Perak, Selangor, Penang, Kelantan, and Kedah. PAS (see Figure 3) restricts membership to Muslims and explicitly fights for Islam, with its key pledge to enforce hudud law in the country, a strict Islamic penal code that punishes theft with amputation of limbs and adultery and apostasy with death by stoning.



Figure 3: PAS president Hadi Awang. Retrieved from Hadi Awang's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/abdulhadiawang/photos/a.146911638727296.38382.146911248727335/1399108290174285/?type=1&theater>

Amanah was formed by progressive leaders who quit PAS, while PPBM is a splinter party from Umno that is headed by former prime minister and former Umno president Mahathir Mohamad. Like Umno, PPBM is also a Malay nationalist party and restricts membership to Malays. Like PAS, Amanah's goal is to uphold Islam, though perhaps a more moderate version of the religion. PKR posits itself as a moderate multi-racial party led by Malay-Muslims, while DAP's membership is predominantly Chinese, even though the party is technically open to all races. PKR, whose de facto leader is Anwar Ibrahim, was formed after then prime minister Mahathir Mohamad sacked Anwar from Cabinet in 1998¹. PH is now led by Mahathir.

¹ BBC (1999, November). A crisis unfolds: Timeline. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/special_report/1998/10/98/malaysia_crisis/204632.stm

PH's ideology can be considered conservative and centre-right, though, like its predecessor Pakatan Rakyat, it is unclear what its main views are because the component parties have very different ideologies. It is also generally a race-based coalition like the ruling BN. PH has announced it will run in the 2018 general election against both BN and PAS.

Information and data are hard to come by in Malaysia, but paradoxically, one's personal data is widely available and gets little protection from abuse.

Section 2B of the Official Secrets Act 1972 allows "any" government document² to be classified a state secret, including water and toll concession agreements³, crime statistics, and, up until 2005, even the country's Air Pollution Index⁴. Wrongful communication of a state secret is punishable with imprisonment between one and seven years.

The Malaysian Auditor-General's 2016 report on state investment firm 1Malaysia Development Berhad (1MDB), which is under investigation in at least 10 countries⁵ for alleged offences like money laundering and misappropriation of funds, was classified a state secret⁶. United States Attorney-General Jeff Sessions said last December that 1MDB officials allegedly laundered more than US\$4.5 billion. The US' Department of Justice has filed several lawsuits to confiscate more than US\$1.7 billion in assets suspected to have been misappropriated from 1MDB⁷.

In Malaysia, however, no one has been arrested for corruption so far in connection to 1MDB. The US lawsuits have claimed that US\$681 million of the stolen funds from 1MDB went into the account of "Malaysian Official 1", who returned most of it. Malaysian Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Abdul Rahman Dahlan⁸ has confirmed that "MO1" is Prime Minister Najib Razak. Attorney-General Mohd Apandi Ali⁹, however, cleared Najib in 2016 of any wrongdoing over the deposit of US\$681 million into the latter's personal bank accounts months before the 2013 general election, claiming the money was a gift from the Saudi royal family.

The captivating 1MDB case (see Figure 4) – unlike previous corruption scandals in Malaysia due to its global reach, ties to Hollywood, and luxury assets¹⁰ purchased with money allegedly stolen from the fund – highlights the extent of graft and money politics in a country that has only seen one federal government, Barisan Nasional (BN), since its independence in 1957.

² Official Secrets Act 1972. Retrieved from

<http://www.agc.gov.my/agcportal/uploads/files/Publications/LOM/EN/Act%2088.pdf>

³ theSundaily (2007, February). Retrieved from <http://www.thesundaily.my/node/171354>

⁴ Alkaf, H. (2014, November). 4 things you should know about Malaysia's Official Secrets Act (OSA). Retrieved from <https://cilisos.my/4-things-you-should-know-about-malaysias-official-secrets-act-osa/>

⁵ Adam, S. and Sam, C. (2016, July). How Malaysia's 1MDB fund scandal reaches around the world. Retrieved from <https://www.bloomberg.com/graphics/2016-malaysia-1mdb/>

⁶ Zahiid, S.J. (2016, March). Final 1MDB audit report under OSA to prevent info leak, PAC chief says. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/final-1mdb-audit-report-under-osa-to-prevent-info-leak-pac-chief-says#ibwo1R5aMPt1tYb3.97>

⁷ Reuters staff (2017, December). Jeff Sessions calls Malaysia's 1MDB scandal 'kleptocracy at its worst'. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-malaysia-scandal-doj/jeff-sessions-calls-malaysias-1mdb-scandal-kleptocracy-at-its-worst-idUSKBN1DZoMX>

⁸ Vaswani, K. (2016, September). Who is 'Malaysian Official 1'? Case closed. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/business-37234717>

⁹ Holmes, O. (2016, January). Malaysian prime minister cleared of corruption over \$681m Saudi 'gift'. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/26/malaysian-pm-najib-razak-cleared-corruption-gift-saudi-royals>

¹⁰ Tang, R. (2016, July). [PHOTOS] All these ultra-luxurious assets were allegedly bought with 1MDB funds. Retrieved from <http://says.com/my/news/photos-of-assets-purchased-with-1mdb-funds>



Figure 4: The Edge Financial Daily's report on July 10 2015 on the 1MDB scandal. Picture from at <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/the-edge-daily-and-weekly-suspended-three-months-over-1mdb-reports>

These money politics up till now in March 2018, however, have always revolved around vote-buying, not on using Malaysian voters' personal data per se to craft tailored political strategies or election campaigns.

The Wall Street Journal reported¹¹ in December 2015 that the money Najib had received was given to politicians or for projects to help the ruling party win the 2013 elections. According to the Journal, Najib allegedly used 1MDB to channel at least US\$140 million to projects like schools and low-cost housing to help boost Umno's chances in the election. Money from 1MDB was also allegedly used for things like scholarships for ethnic Chinese students and shelters for indigenous people in Sarawak, an east Malaysian state.

As the 13th general election approached in 2013, the Journal reported that 1MDB began transferring hundreds of millions of dollars to politicians for their election campaigns. Najib, who is BN chairman, announced projects like low-cost housing and hospitals throughout the country. 1MDB allegedly financed free trips to Mecca for more than 1,000 village headmen.

In the northern state of Penang, a group called 1Malaysia Penang Welfare Club gave checks for hundreds of thousands of dollars to nongovernment groups who attended its event. 1Malaysia is a slogan created by Najib when he became prime minister in 2009. 1Malaysia Penang Welfare Club was reportedly organised by a man that the Journal said was a school friend of Jho Low, a central figure linked to 1MDB and acted as a senior strategist for BN in his home state of Penang during the 2013 election. The Journal reported that Najib had also announced during the 2013 election campaign that Yayasan Rakyat 1Malaysia, a

¹¹ Wright, T. and Hope, B. (2015, December). 1MDB and the money network of Malaysian politics. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-money-network-of-malaysian-politics-1451355113>

foundation he controlled, would donate RM2 million¹² to two local schools in Penang, which the Journal said was aimed at winning Chinese support. The ethnic Chinese made up less than a quarter, or about 23.2 per cent of the 28.7 million-strong population in 2017, compared to an estimated 68.8 per cent of Bumiputera, seven per cent of Indians, and one percent of other ethnic communities. Chinese-majority seats, where the community comprises more than half the voter base, accounted for 30 out of 222 seats in Parliament during the 2013 election¹³.

Yayasan Rakyat 1Malaysia had reportedly received a donation of about US\$10 million from Genting Plantations Bhd¹⁴, a plantation arm of the Genting Group, a few months after 1MDB allegedly bought power assets from Genting Group in October 2012 at an inflated price, five times what it was then worth. Wall Street Journal also reported that in the days before polling day on May 5, Umno supporters organised free dinners¹⁵ and gave out cash. BN's rival Pakatan Rakyat, however, later won two-thirds majority¹⁶ in the Penang state assembly.

An anonymous letter written to Aliran magazine¹⁷ claimed that RM50 petrol vouchers from 1Malaysia Penang Welfare Club were given out to the public in April 2013 in Penang. The vouchers reportedly came with forms, where one had to fill in their name, address, identity card (IC) number (see Figure 5), mobile phone number and email address to take part in a lucky draw. Another form to acknowledge receipt of the petrol voucher requires one's full name and IC number, address, contact number, the company one works at.



Figure 5: Sample MyKad. Retrieved from: <https://www.lowyat.net/2017/148361/data-breach-fallout-time-review-malaysian-mykad-number/>

¹² Malaysiakini (2015, June). WSJ: Najib used 1MDB's funds for GE13. Retrieved from <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/302433>

¹³ Lim, I. (2018, April). Does the Chinese vote really matter? Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/does-the-chinese-vote-really-matter>

¹⁴ Malaysiakini (2015, June). WSJ: Najib used 1MDB's funds for GE13. Retrieved from <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/302433>

¹⁵ Wright, T. and Hope, B. (2015, December). 1MDB and the money network of Malaysian politics. Retrieved from <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-money-network-of-malaysian-politics-1451355113>

¹⁶ StarProperty (2013, May). GE13: Pakatan retains its hold on Penang. Retrieved from <http://www.starproperty.my/index.php/articles/property-news/ge13-pakatan-retains-its-hold-on-penang/?search=Penang>

¹⁷ Rakyat Jelata (2013, April). Umno-BN – Buying low-income votes, appealing to middle-income greed. Retrieved from <https://aliran.com/thinking-allowed-online/ta-online/umno-bn-buying-lower-income-votes-appealing-to-middle-income-greed/>

The MyKad¹⁸ (MyKid for children below the age of 12) is an identity card (IC) issued to all Malaysian citizens. It contains one's name, IC number, address, gender, race, religion, citizenship status, fingerprint minutiae, and photograph. For both the MyKad and MyKid, a Muslim or a child born to Muslim parents has the word "Islam"¹⁹ printed on their card, whereas for non-Muslims, one's faith is not printed on the card but recorded in the National Registration Department's (NRD) database.

It is unclear what such personal data was used for, or by whom. It is unlikely that the information was used to come up with highly targeted, personalised political messages in election campaigns, as BN's modus operandi has always been to promise aid and development in exchange for support, or even, allegedly, to engage in explicit vote-buying through cash. The federal Opposition, Pakatan Harapan (PH), also allegedly engages in money politics and bribery during elections.

Bersih 2.0²⁰ reported that bribery, treating, and money politics continued to be widespread during polls, as seen in the 2016 Sarawak state elections and the Sungai Besar and Kuala Kangsar by-elections that year. The polls watchdog noted that both federal and state governments (by both BN and PH) used government machinery in election campaigns. "Goodies and giveaways" in the guise of government programmes are common during election campaigning. Little action is taken even though the Election Offences Act criminalises the bribing of voters, providing food or drinks to influence a voter, or paying for the transport of voters to the poll²¹.

A few local political analysts²² said in March that PPBM, the Malay party in Pakatan Harapan headed by former prime minister Mahathir, lacked funds and grassroots machinery in its bid to take on Umno in rural Malay seats, claiming that some voters were susceptible to "election goodies" like cash handouts, free petrol and meals, things that they have come to expect from BN but which PH could not afford to give.

"Which party is more capable of paying for voters who are going back to their hometown to vote? The general perception remains that BN is better able to do this. That is the challenge PH faces," Universiti Malaya political analyst Associate Professor Dr Awang Azman Awang Pawi was quoted saying.

According to Thomas Fann²³, a steering committee member with Bersih 2.0, a movement for free and fair elections, in general, there are many reports of cash handouts to secure votes for BN, ranging from RM50 to RM500 for each voter. Village or longhouse chiefs allegedly receive "stacks of cash" to secure the votes of whole communities. Reimbursing voters for traveling to vote was reportedly common. Bukit Melawati state assemblyman Jakiran Jacomah from Umno reportedly confirmed that RM50 was given to voters in his constituency during the 2013 general election, but said the money was merely to "cover

¹⁸ National Registration Department. Aplikasi kad pengenalan. Retrieved from

<http://www.jpn.gov.my/en/informasimykad/main-applications/#1458809844660-272foe52-67cf>

¹⁹ Boo, S.L. (2016, February). Keeping religious status off MyKad, birth certs may solve interfaith woes, rights groups say. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/keeping-religious-status-off-mykad-birth-certs-may-solve-interfaith-woes-ri#DFIsYDE9ke38I1Hu.97>

²⁰ Bersih 2.0 (2017, May). Make your vote count! Bersih 2.0's demands for GE14 electoral reforms. Retrieved from https://www.bersih.org/ge14-electoral-reforms-memo/#_Toc480554771

²¹ Bersih 2.0 (2017, May). Make your vote count! Bersih 2.0's demands for GE14 electoral reforms. Retrieved from https://www.bersih.org/ge14-electoral-reforms-memo/#_Toc480554771

²² Iskandar, A. (2018, March). Dr Mahathir and the coveted Malay vote. Retrieved from <https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/43569/>

²³ Fann, T. (2016, January). How to buy an election. Retrieved from <https://thomasfann.wordpress.com/2016/01/12/how-to-buy-an-election/>

costs for petrol”²⁴. In Sabah, Kepayan residents claimed BN leaders, including candidates, handed out cash in RM50 denominations to voters. Locals in southern Sabah reportedly claimed vehicles from BN entourages carried safe boxes containing RM50 and RM100 notes²⁵.

Bersih 2.0 listed several vote-buying incidents involving both the ruling BN and PH in the 2016 by-elections in the parliamentary seats of Kuala Kangsar in Perak and Sungai Besar in Selangor. According to Bersih 2.0²⁶, which monitored both by-elections that were held on the same day on June 18, 2016, BN parties and federal ministries and departments (Department of Orang Asli Development, Youth and Sports Ministry, Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry, Department of Fisheries, Communications and Multimedia Ministry) gave out things like RM500 to rubber tappers, building an RM43.5 million bridge, a free dinner with free alcohol and a lucky draw, 10kg bags of rice, fertiliser, pesticides, farming tools, balls and shuttlecocks, RM100 to RM300 of allowance for registered fishermen, announced million-ringgit subsidies for fertiliser and pesticides, walkie talkies, as well as first aid kits. PH parties and PAS also allegedly gave out “goodies”, though much less than BN, such as vegetables, free motor service, T-shirts, and a lucky draw with gifts like an iron, blender, and stand mixer.

At the time of writing, as the 14th general election draws near, election “goodies” have started to be handed out. In Kelantan that has been under PAS for almost three decades, Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi²⁷, who is also Umno vice-president, announced in March an RM3.5 million allocation to the Pasir Puteh parliament constituency, comprising RM2 million for repair, RM1 million to upgrade a hall, and RM500,000 to help single mothers. He reportedly promised another RM4 million for house repair if BN could win Pasir Puteh and four state seats. In Bentong, Pahang, MCA president Liow Tiong Lai²⁸ said last March he would request a mini stadium for his constituency.

PKR and DAP politicians from Selangor, which has been under a Pakatan administration since 2008 (comprising PKR, DAP and PAS), are also inclined to touting the state government’s welfare programmes in the run-up to the 2018 election. At a carnival²⁹ in March to celebrate Pakatan’s 10th year in power, PKR women’s chief Zuraida Kamaruddin promoted the state’s RM200 monthly assistance programme for housewives with a household income of less than RM2,000 monthly. The carnival also reportedly showcased the state government’s other initiatives, such as savings schemes for newborns, contributions to the elderly, and bereavement aid. RM200 (EUR 41.75) can buy perhaps a few days’ worth of groceries³⁰; the mean monthly household income in Malaysia in 2016 was RM6,958, while the median was RM5,228³¹.

²⁴ Pragalath, K. (2013, May). ‘RM50 to buy voters in Bukit Melawati’. Retrieved from

<http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2013/05/20/rm50-to-buy-voters-in-bukit-melawati/>

²⁵ Rintod, L. (2013, April). ‘Feel good’ cash handouts begin. Retrieved from

<http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2013/04/29/feel-good-cash-handouts-begin/>

²⁶ Bersih 2.0 (2016, June). SPR, fahamilah Akta Pilihan Raya 1954. Retrieved from <http://www.bersih.org/spr-fahamilah-akta-pilihan-raya-1954/>

²⁷ Bernama (2018, March). No better time to win back Kelantan than now, Ahmad Zahid says. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/no-better-time-to-win-back-kelantan-than-now-ahmad-zahid-says#lRR15OSA08bHyxRD.97>

²⁸ Chung, C. (2018, March). Liow to request for a mini stadium in Bentong. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/03/18/liow-to-request-for-a-mini-stadium-in-bentong/>

²⁹ Alhadjri, A. (2018, March). People-friendly policies a highlight at S’gor govt’s 10th year bash. Retrieved from <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/416115>

³⁰ TODAY (2017, April). Compare: What you can buy with RM50 and S\$50 at a supermarket. Retrieved from <http://www.todayonline.com/singapore/what-one-can-get-rm50-s50>

³¹ Department of Statistics Malaysia (2017, October). Report of Household Income And Basic Amenities Survey 2016. Retrieved from

Umno Youth vice chief Khairul Azwan Harun³² said in April 2017 that although his party possessed huge amounts of voters' personal data, including names, phone numbers, IC numbers, and addresses, Umno had "failed to utilise the richness of the data" in the past. He had said Umno members collected various bits of information on voters, like the name of their spouse, their job, the number of spouses and children they have, where their children are studying, and their favourite hangout spots. But it is unclear how exactly this data is used in campaigning, or if it is used at all.

The prioritisation of money and development politics (by both sides of the political divide) must be seen in the context of Malaysia's political system. The country has had only one federal government – BN (prior to 1974, its original form, the Alliance) – since the independence of Malaya on August 31, 1957 and the formation of Malaysia (comprising the peninsula, Sabah, Sarawak, and Singapore) on September 16, 1963. Singapore left, or was kicked out (depending who you talk to), of the federation on August 9, 1965.

BN (the Alliance then) lost its two-thirds majority in Parliament, which it needs to amend the Federal Constitution, for the first time on May 11, 1969³³ during the counting for peninsular seats. Two days later, the May 13 race riots³⁴ exploded, killing hundreds. The official government account blamed the riots on the alleged infiltration of communist elements into the predominantly Chinese opposition parties, whereas Kua Kia Soong, author of "May 13: Declassified documents on the Malaysian riots of 1969", blamed Umno, claiming that the riots were orchestrated and not a spontaneous eruption of violence. The New Economic Policy (NEP)³⁵, which put into place various pro-"Bumiputera" (sons of the soil) policies and quotas to narrow the economic gap between the Malays and Chinese, was shortly introduced in 1971. It was meant to have lasted for only 20 years, but race-based policies in favour of the Malay majority continue to be practiced today. BN is a race-based political coalition that currently comprises 13 component parties: the main parties are Umno, MCA, MIC, Gerakan, and in Sarawak, PBB. Umno, a Malay party, is the head. MCA and MIC limit their memberships to Chinese and Indians. Gerakan's membership is open to Malaysians regardless of race, but it is predominantly Chinese.

Fast forward to 2008³⁶, BN lost its two-thirds parliamentary majority for the first time since 1969, winning 140 out of 222 seats in Parliament. The ruling coalition also lost five states – Penang, Kedah, Perak, Selangor and Kelantan. BN performed worse in the 2013 election, securing 133 parliament seats (a simple majority in Parliament) and failing to recapture Selangor, Penang and Kelantan. It lost the popular vote for the first time in history, getting only a 47 per cent share³⁷. Selangor and Penang's chief ministers are from PKR and DAP respectively, while the east coast state of Kelantan has been under PAS since 1990.

https://www.dosm.gov.my/v1/index.php?r=column/cthemByCat&cat=120&bul_id=RUZ5REwveU1ra1hGL21JWV1PRmU2Zz09&menu_id=amVoWU54UTloa21NWmdhMjFMMWcyZz09

³² Boo, S.L. (2017, April). BN reveals art of targeting voters. Retrieved from

<http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/bn-reveals-art-of-targeting-voters#m7BsroaOeOIV2jGY.97>

³³ Wong, C.H. The 'denationalisation' of Barisan Nasional. Retrieved from <http://penanginstitute.org/v3/media-centre/penang-institute-in-the-news/430-the-denationalisation-of-barisan-nasional>

³⁴ Lopez, G. (2010, May). May 13, 1969. Retrieved from <http://www.newmandala.org/may-13-1969/>

³⁵ Lim, I. (2015, September). Economist: NEP has outlived its relevance, Malaysia must end it to progress. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/economist-nep-has-outlived-its-relevance-malaysia-must-end-it-to-progress#hIKeWtxkjuoIOc60.97>

³⁶ The Economist (2008, March). Political tsunami? Retrieved from <https://www.economist.com/node/10833119>

³⁷ Iskandar, A. (2017, August). Two-thirds majority for BN more likely now, says political observer. Retrieved from <https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/12999/>

In the 2008 election, PKR, DAP and PAS did not run against each other to ensure the best possible outcome in the first-past-the-post system. Pakatan Rakyat comprising the three parties was formed shortly after the poll. However, the pact fell apart³⁸ in 2015 due to disagreements between the Chinese-dominant DAP and Islamist party PAS. Pakatan Harapan (PH)³⁹ – comprising PKR, DAP, PAS splinter party Amanah, and Umno splinter party PPBM – was born later. PH is led by former Umno president and ex-prime minister Mahathir Mohamad, who is also the chairman of PPBM and PH's prime minister candidate.

PKR and DAP do not limit memberships based on race or religion, although their members are predominantly Malay and Chinese respectively. PPBM restricts main membership to Malays, while Amanah espouses an Islamic agenda. PAS restricts membership to Muslims and also champions an Islamic ideology.

Digital context

Although the Personal Data Protection Act⁴⁰ (PDPA) 2010 was enacted to regulate the processing of personal data in commercial transactions, two major data breaches have occurred since the law was passed in 2010. Technology news portal Lowyat.net reported in October 2017 that the personal details of 46.2 million⁴¹ mobile number subscribers from Malaysian telcos and mobile virtual network operators have been leaked and put up for sale online, stolen from a 2014 data breach. The data⁴² from the telco records leaked included customer names, billing addresses, mobile numbers, sim card numbers, imsi numbers, handset models, and customers' IC numbers. The personal data of millions of Malaysians belonging to recruitment website Jobstreet.com, the Malaysian Medical Council, the Malaysian Medical Association, Academy of Medicine Malaysia, the Malaysian Housing Loan Applications, the Malaysian Dental Association and the National Specialist Register of Malaysia was also reportedly put up for sale on Lowyat Forums for an undisclosed amount of bitcoin. Lowyat.net reported that the breached Jobstreet database contained almost 17 million rows of customer information, including the candidate's name, login name, hashed passwords, email id, nationality, address and handphone number. Over 20,000 records from the Malaysian Medical Association were leaked, while the breached data from the Malaysian Medical Council, which oversees the registration of medical practitioners, reportedly contained almost 62,000 records. According to Lowyat.net, the data leaked included names, IC numbers, mobile numbers, and home and work addresses.

The first response from Malaysia's internet regulator, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission⁴³ (MCMC), was to order Lowyat.net to remove its first report on

³⁸ Malay Mail (2015, June). Pakatan is no more, DAP declares. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/pakatan-is-no-more-dap-declares#rTMxrRjozARqKAzQ.97>

³⁹ Anand, R. (2017, March). PPBM officially part of Pakatan Harapan. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/ppbm-officially-part-of-pakatan-harapan#56uqjD5PwJWh1CL9.97>

⁴⁰ Yatim, R. (2012, Feb). Protecting your personal data. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2012/02/12/protecting-your-personal-data/>

⁴¹ Vijandren (2017, October). 46.2 million Malaysian mobile phone numbers leaked from 2014 data breach. Retrieved from <https://www.lowyat.net/2017/146339/46-2-million-mobile-phone-numbers-leaked-from-2014-data-breach/>

⁴² Vijandren (2017, October). Personal data of millions of Malaysians up for sale, sources of breach still unknown. Retrieved from <https://www.lowyat.net/2017/145654/personal-data-millions-malaysians-sale-source-breach-still-unknown/>

⁴³ Malay Mail (2017, October). MCMC: Removal of report on alleged data breach 'preventive measure', probe underway. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/mcmc-removal-of-report-on-alleged-data-breach-preventive-measure-probe-unde#U4euD6CeRl7kQlJ8.97>

the massive data breach, describing the article as an “advertisement of the sale”. MCMC later allowed Lowyat.net to restore the article.

Lowyat.net reported last January another data breach, this time involving 220,000 pledged Malaysian organ donors⁴⁴ and their next-of-kin. The data was reportedly leaked online as early as September 2016, containing various personal details of pledged organ donors like their name, IC number, date of birth, age, nationality, race, gender, address, phone number, email address, and organs to donate. The leaked data included information of the pledger’s next-of-kin, which were name, relationship, address, and phone number. Lowyat.net said the leaked data contained sign up data from government hospitals and National Transplant Resource Centers across Malaysia, which it said meant the information had been retrieved from a central database.

Police said they were investigating the latest data breach, but claimed to have little progress⁴⁵ with its joint investigation with the MCMC on the previous data leak involving 46.2 million mobile number subscribers. None of the telcos – or any of the private or government entities named in Lowyat.net’s reports, except for Jobstreet.com⁴⁶ which publicly acknowledged the data breach – have made public announcements about notifying those affected, or how they would better protect customer data.

The PDPA does not apply to federal or state governments; it only covers commercial transactions. The law also does not require⁴⁷ parties to admit breaches of their databases. The Department of Personal Data Protection Malaysia has also said the use of personal data for political campaigning purposes did not fall within the jurisdiction of the PDPA. The MyKad⁴⁸ (MyKid for children below the age of 12) is an identity card (IC) issued to all Malaysian citizens. It contains one’s name, IC number, address, gender, race, religion, citizenship status, fingerprint minutiae, and photograph. For both the MyKad and MyKid, a Muslim or a child born to Muslim parents has the word “Islam”⁴⁹ printed on their card, whereas for non-Muslims, one’s faith is not printed on the card but recorded in the (NRD) database. Birth certificates also record a child’s race and religious status. One can also apply to have one’s MyKad record one’s driving license information, like expiry date, license type, and category of license owner; passport information like expiry date and serial number; digital certificates; and basic health information like blood type, allergies, organ implants, chronic diseases, and information on beneficiary or next-of-kin. The NRD records births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and citizenship, among others. One’s IC number and MyKad is used almost everywhere in Malaysia, from passing it to the guardhouse before entering a gated and guarded neighbourhood (common in cities), to accessing public services like health care, sitting for school examinations, and getting a driving license, or registering for a conference or even for a short 5km run. The MyKad is used ubiquitously in Malaysia, often with no knowledge on how people recording IC numbers in sign-up sheets store such data. There have also been reports of a rise in scam

⁴⁴ Vijandren (2018, January). Personal details of 220,000 Malaysian organ donors and their next of kin leaked online. Retrieved from <https://www.lowyat.net/2018/153125/personal-details-220000-malaysian-organ-donors-next-kin-leaked-online/>

⁴⁵ Kumar, A. (2018, January). Police to call up Lowyat.net admin over data breach report. Retrieved from <http://www.thesundaily.my/news/2018/01/24/police-call-lowyatnet-admin-over-data-breach-report>

⁴⁶ The Star (2017, November). JobStreet confirms data breach involving data from pre-2012. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/tech/tech-news/2017/11/01/jobstreetdotcom-confirms-data-breach-involving-data-from-pre-2012/>

⁴⁷ The Star Says (2017, November). Data breach opens up a can of worms. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/the-star-says/2017/11/05/data-breach-opens-up-a-can-of-worms/>

⁴⁸ National Registration Department. Aplikasi kad pengenalan. Retrieved from <http://www.jpn.gov.my/en/informasimykad/main-applications/#1458809844660-272foe52-67cf>

⁴⁹ Boo, S.L. (2016, February). Keeping religious status off MyKad, birth certs may solve interfaith woes, rights groups say. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/keeping-religious-status-off-mykad-birth-certs-may-solve-interfaith-woes-ri#DFIsYDE9ke38I1Hu.97>

calls⁵⁰ from scammers pretending to be bank officers, who try to gather as much information as possible from their victims. Cybersecurity experts⁵¹ also said they expected a spike in marketing and scam calls and messages following the leak of 46.2 million mobile phone subscribers' data, such as messages offering property, "loans" and credit for online casinos, or phone calls claiming one owed a bank money or that one's relative was arrested for a drug-related offence. The writer herself, who owns an apartment unit in Subang Jaya, had received unsolicited text messages from people claiming to have tenants or buyers looking for property in her area at a time when she was searching for tenants.

The Ministry of Health announced in April 2017 the Malaysian Health Data Warehouse (MyHDW)⁵² that aims to synchronise patient data from private and public clinics and hospitals, including patients' medical records, as well as data from the National Registration Department (which records Malaysian citizens' birth, death, marriage, and divorce), the Department of Statistics, and other health-related agencies. The Health Ministry's announcement said MyHDW was at Phase One and had already collected data from 2.5 million inpatients from all government and military hospitals and daycare unit services. Phase Two of MyHDW aims to collect 70 million outpatient medical record data from other health facilities like health and specialist clinics.

It is unknown if these patients were informed beforehand about the collection of their data. No public consultations were done before the launch of the data warehouse. It is also unknown exactly what kind of data will be stored in MyHDW. MyHDW was developed by the Health Ministry in collaboration with Mimos Bhd, a technology provider under the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation.

Health director-general Dr Noor Hisham Abdullah⁵³ claimed that MyHDW would not contain any personal information of patients like their name and address. He also said medical records would remain in hospitals and not be shared with any third parties. A Malaysian Medical Council member, Dr Milton Lum⁵⁴, however was unconvinced about how patient confidentiality would be protected and said some personally identifiable information was required for data mining in healthcare.

"Big data" is a term that has started to be bandied about by Malaysian government officials, but it is unclear what exactly that entails. The Communications and Multimedia Ministry⁵⁵ said in May 2017 it was working with a few agencies on big data analytics. The Sarawak⁵⁶ state government said in October 2017 it would roll out "Sarawak Big Data" (see Figure 6) in April 2018, a centralised database containing government data, though it is unknown what kind of data that is. Malaysian Administrative Modernisation and Planning Unit

⁵⁰ Vijandren (2017, October). PSA: Scam calls from spoofed bank numbers on the rise. Retrieved from <https://www.lowyat.net/2017/144572/psa-scam-calls-spoofed-bank-numbers-rise/>

⁵¹ Tan, R. (2017, November). IT experts: Brace for more weird calls. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/11/17/it-experts-brace-for-more-weird-calls-be-alert-for-scammers-and-personal-data-requests-mobile-phone/>

⁵² Kamal, S.M. (2017, April). Big data in healthcare: What we (need to) know. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/big-data-in-healthcare-what-we-need-to-know>

⁵³ Malay Mail (2017, April). MoH: MyHDW won't contain personal details of patients. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/moh-myhdw-wont-contain-personal-details-of-patients>

⁵⁴ S.L. Boo and Kumar, K. (2017, April). Oversight body necessary for patient data collection, government told. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/oversight-body-necessary-for-patient-data-collection-government-told>

⁵⁵ The Malay Mail (2017, May). Communications Ministry says committed to development, use of big data in Malaysia. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/communications-ministry-says-committed-to-development-use-of-big-data-in-ma>

⁵⁶ Borneo Post Online (2017, October). Sarawak Big Data to be rolled out April 2018. Retrieved from <http://www.theborneopost.com/2017/10/15/sarawak-big-data-to-be-rolled-out-april-2018/>

(MAMPU)⁵⁷, which is an agency under the Prime Minister's Department, said in October 2017 that it was trying to promote data sharing among government agencies to improve their services to the public.

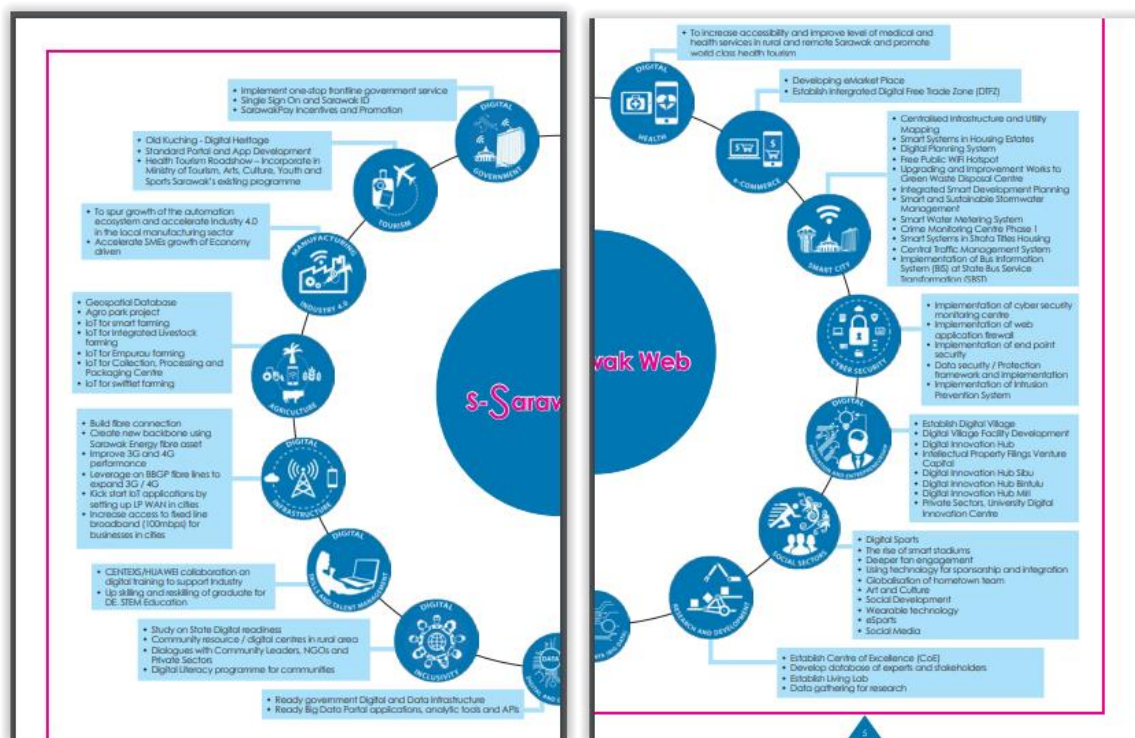


Figure 6: Screenshot of Sarawak Digital Economy Strategy 2018-2022 Report. Retrieved from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/57df44c115d5dba740ca7fd4/t/5a323260e4966b4841bda4fa/1513239179277/DES_Booklet.pdf

Malaysia's secrecy law, the Official Secrets Act (OSA), complicates matters. The Open Data Readiness Assessment report⁵⁸ released by World Bank in May 2017 said Malaysian government agencies were unclear about laws relating to information, particularly the OSA and the PDPA. According to the report, some "key agencies" expressed reluctance to release data for fear of misuse and decisions to share data with the public or third parties, or even between government agencies, were made on a case-by-case basis at a high level. The World Bank report said the private sector has been demanding for more crime statistics and data on public transport, health care, public safety, and education. Civil society⁵⁹, it said, pushed for specific data on procurement, tenders and budgets, in their work monitoring government financial management.

⁵⁷ Kelleher, J. (2017, October). Malaysian government data ocean, hosted by MAMPU, is not just a 'pool' of data. Retrieved from <https://www.opengovasia.com/articles/6775-malaysian-government-data-ocean-hosted-by-mampu-is-not-just-a-pool-of-data>

⁵⁸ The Malay Mail (2017, May). Report: Government agencies confused about OSA, fear data manipulation. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/report-government-agencies-confused-about-osa-fear-data-manipulation#FdpCTkpOHXOrOrFb.97>

⁵⁹ The Malay Mail (2017, May). Report: Businesses want more data on crime, public transport. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/report-businesses-want-more-data-on-crime-public-transport#IeqirTAJRD55UuoY.97>

Political-digital context

Up until the 13th general election in 2013, BN did not appear to use voters' personal data or social media much in its campaigns, sticking instead to its tried-and-tested method of handing out election "goodies" and promising infrastructure development. This is because BN's vote bank is in rural areas with Malay-majority voters. In terms of communications, there was not much need then for the ruling coalition to use social media because it largely controlled the mainstream media. The Opposition was forced to use the new media because it had little access to newspapers, radio or television stations.

According to Politweet⁶⁰, in the 2013 election, 108 out of the 133 federal seats (in a 222-seat Parliament) that BN won were rural ones. The ruling coalition only won 20 and five semi-urban and urban seats respectively. Out of 222 parliament seats in total, 125 are rural, 54 semi-urban and 43 urban.

After the bruising 2013 election, however, BN has since improved its social media presence. Politweet estimated⁶¹ that BN's popularity on Facebook was almost double that of the Opposition, with 5.8 million Facebook users aged 21 and above expressing interest in the former compared to 3.1 million users in the latter. Umno was the most popular Malaysian political party on Facebook with 4.4 million users expressing interest in it, followed by PKR (1.8 million users), DAP (1.3 million users), PAS (950,000 users), MCA (740,000 users), Gerakan (150,000 users) and MIC (81,000 users). "Interest" in a political party, however, did not necessarily indicate support, only awareness, according to Politweet.

According to the Statistics Department⁶², households with internet access rose to 85.7 per cent in 2017 from 70.1 per cent in 2015. A total of 74.1 per cent and 98.1 per cent of households had computer and mobile phone access respectively. Most internet users (86.3 per cent) reportedly spent time on social networking sites like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. About 80 per cent of individuals aged 15 years and above used the internet.

A 2017 survey⁶³ by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission showed that smartphones were the most popular device for users to access the internet. A total of 96.3 per cent of users surveyed used the internet for text messaging, while 89.3 per cent visited social networking sites. About 87 per cent used the internet to get information. The survey said there were about 21.9 million social media users in 2016, out of a 31.6 million-strong population in Malaysia. Most of them (97.3 per cent) said they owned a Facebook account, followed by Instagram (56.1 percent), and YouTube (45.3 per cent). Only slightly more than a quarter (26.6 per cent) said they had a Twitter account. Malaysia is reportedly in the top 10 countries⁶⁴ in the world for video consumption on Facebook in terms of time spent watching (159 minutes on average, compared to the global average of 102 minutes). Malaysians also reportedly have 1.6 times more friends on Facebook than the global average.

⁶⁰ Politweet (2013, May). The rural-urban divide in Malaysia's general election. Retrieved from <https://politweet.wordpress.com/2013/05/21/the-rural-urban-divide-in-malaysias-general-election/>

⁶¹ The Malay Mail (2017, October). Politweet: BN's popularity on Facebook almost double that of Opposition. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/politweet-bns-popularity-on-facebook-almost-double-that-of-opposition>

⁶² The Malay Mail (2018, March). Stats Dept: Households with internet access increase to 85.7pc n 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/stats-dept-households-with-internet-access-increase-to-85.7pc-in-2017>

⁶³ Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission. Internet users survey 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.mcmc.gov.my/skmmgovmy/media/General/pdf/MCMC-Internet-Users-Survey-2017.pdf>

⁶⁴ Lee, R. (2016, May). Malaysians are leading the world in social media and mobile. Retrieved from <https://www.soyacinau.com/2016/05/05/malaysians-are-leading-the-world-in-social-media-and-mobile/>

SENARAI HARGA DAFTAR PEMILIH TERKINI UNTUK SUKU TAHUN 4/2017

SELANGOR		PEMILIH	HARGA
P.092	SABAK BERNAM		
N.01	SUNGAI AIR TAWAR	16,314	RM66.60
N.02	SABAK	24,641	RM100.00
JUMLAH BAGI PARLIMEN P.092		40,955	RM 166.60
P.093	SUNGAI BESAR		
N.03	SUNGAI PANJANG	30,716	RM125.00
N.04	SEKINCHAN	18,137	RM73.60
JUMLAH BAGI PARLIMEN P.093		48,853	RM 198.60
P.094	HULU SELANGOR		
N.05	HULU BERNAM	22,921	RM93.20
N.06	KUALA KUBU BAHARU	29,338	RM118.80
N.07	BATANG KALI	48,908	RM198.00
JUMLAH BAGI PARLIMEN P.094		101,167	RM 410.00

Figure 7: Screenshot of prices of Selangor constituencies. Title: List of prices of the latest electoral roll for Quarter 4 of 2017. “Pemilih” refers to the number of voters. “Harga” means the price. “Jumlah bagi Parliamen P.092” means “Total for Parliament P.092”, ie: the price for the roll for the P.092 Parliament seat of Sabak Bernam. The seats under Sabak Bernam (N.01 and No.02) respectively are state seats. Retrieved from http://spr.gov.my/sites/default/files/HargaDPI_ST_4.2017.pdf

Data provided in the Election Commission’s (EC) electoral roll, which can be purchased by anyone (prices listed on its website here, see Figure 7⁶⁵), only contains the voter’s name, date of birth, IC number, gender, and house number. Politicians have said, however, that a voter’s full address can be obtained when an electoral roll is put up on display for voters to check their details. The EC said⁶⁶ the 2017 third quarter supplementary electoral roll (RDPT) would be on display (see Figure 8) for 14 days from October 25 to November 6 2017 at 960 places across the country, such as state election offices, computerised post offices, government complexes / offices, district/ land offices, district/ municipal councils/ multipurpose halls/ Rukun Tetangga (Neighbourhood Watch)/ community centres/ halls, and other places.

⁶⁵ Election Commission. Senarai harga daftar pemilih terkini untuk suku tahun 4/2017. Retrieved from http://www.spr.gov.my/sites/default/files/HargaDPI_ST_4.2017.pdf

⁶⁶ Malay Mail. (2017, October). EC receives 229,919 new voter registration applications. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/ec-receives-229919-new-voter-registration-applications>

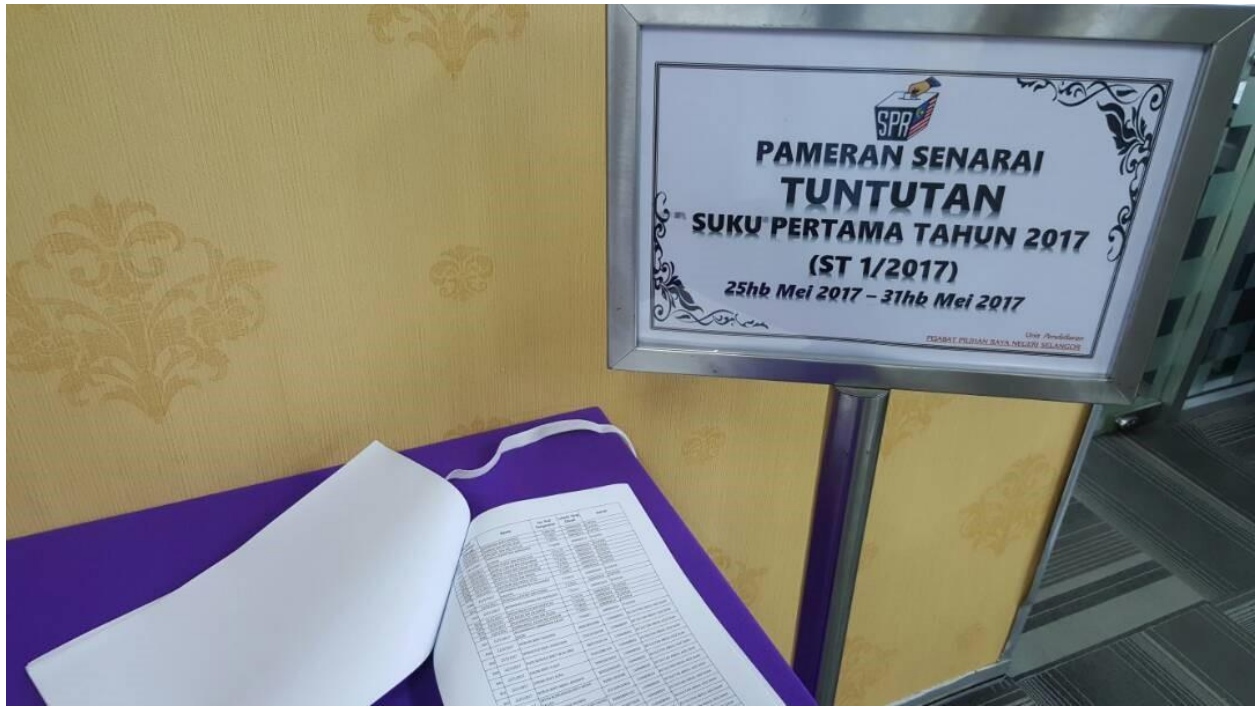


Figure 8: Display of list of claims for the first quarter Supplementary Electoral Roll for 2017 at the Selangor Election Commission office in Shah Alam. According to the EC⁶⁷, the list displays names of people who submitted applications for new voter registration or change of address, but could not find their names on the electoral roll. A DAP politician asks if these numerous claims are voters being added via the “back door” route to help BN. Retrieved from <https://ongkianming.com/2017/05/31/media-statement-is-the-election-commission-ec-trying-to-add-voters-via-the-back-door-to-help-the-bn-win-the-next-general-election/>

Data analytics firm Cambridge Analytica – which has been accused of harvesting⁶⁸ more than 50 million Facebook profiles, mostly belonging to registered US voters, in order to target them with personalised political messages – claims to have done work for BN in Kedah (see Figure 9) in the 2013 election. Cambridge Analytica’s website⁶⁹ said it supported BN in the northern state with a “targeted messaging campaign highlighting their school improvements since 2008”.

⁶⁷ NST (2018, February). EC displays claims list for 2017 supplementary electoral roll. Retrieved from <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2018/02/335187/ec-displays-claims-list-2017-supplementary-electoral-roll>

⁶⁸ Cadwalladr, C. and Graham-Harrison, E. (2018, March). Revealed: 50 million Facebook profiles harvested for Cambridge Analytica in major data breach. Retrieved from

<https://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/17/cambridge-analytica-facebook-influence-us-election>

⁶⁹ CA Political. Malaysia. Retrieved from <https://ca-political.com/casestudies/casestudymalaysia2008>

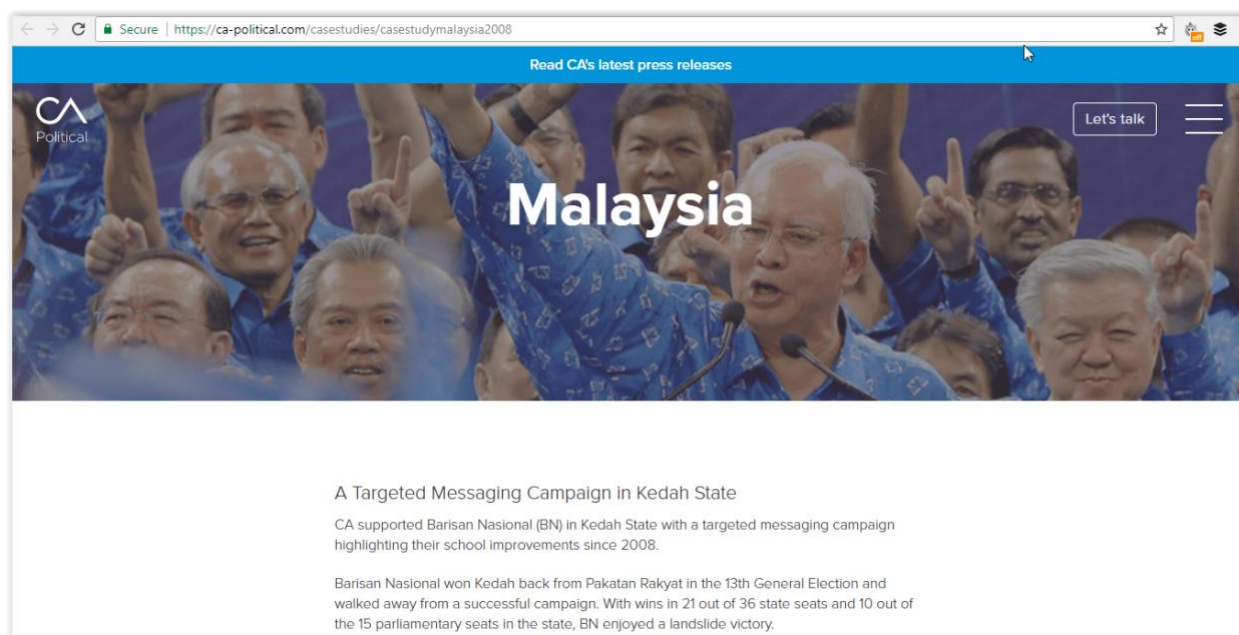


Figure 9: Screenshot from Cambridge Analytica's website claiming Cambridge Analytica supported BN in Kedah in the 2013 election with a targeted messaging campaign. Retrieved from <https://ca-political.com/casestudies/casestudymalaysia2008>

The Prime Minister's Office⁷⁰, however, denied engaging Cambridge Analytica or its parent company SCL Group, saying that neither the government nor BN had ever contracted or paid for their services. The Prime Minister's Office also claimed that an SCL Group country representative told the government that Cambridge Analytica's advice on the 2013 general election was provided "personally" to Mukhriz Mahathir, who was then Kedah BN elections head. SCL Group Southeast Asia chief Azrin Zizal⁷¹ also insisted he had provided communication advice to Mukhriz from Cambridge Analytica/ SCL Group for Kedah for the 2013 election, but claimed such services were provided to Mukhriz "personally". Azrin claimed BN did not employ Cambridge Analytica. Mukhriz was appointed Kedah chief minister after BN wrested back the state in the 2013 election. Mukhriz, who is Mahathir's son, has since left Umno and is now PPBM deputy president. Mukhriz⁷² has denied engaging Cambridge Analytica during the 2013 election.

Two other data analytics firms⁷³, however, said they have worked in Malaysian elections. AutoPolitical, a political artificial intelligence company based in Singapore, said it worked with a few candidates in the 2016 Sarawak state election and claimed victory in all its campaigns. It also said it was working with four political parties for the 14th general election. Meltwater, an international media intelligence company, said it has done work in the 2008 and 2013 polls and is currently working with one party for the 2018 election.

⁷⁰ The Malay Mail (2018, March). Putrajaya: Cambridge Analytica reported directly to Mukhriz, not us. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/putrajaya-cambridge-analytica-reported-directly-to-mukhriz-not-us>

⁷¹ The Malay Mail (2018, March). Ex-aide: Mukhriz a liar, Cambridge Analytica advised him personally for GE13. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/ex-aide-mukhriz-a-liar-cambridge-analytica-advised-him-personally-for-ge13>

⁷² The Malay Mail (2018, March). Ex-Kedah MB denies working with Cambridge Analytica in last GE. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/mukhriz-claims-he-never-worked-with-cambridge-analytica-in-the-last-ge>

⁷³ Boo, S.L. (2017, April). How Malaysian politicians use big data to profile you. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/how-malaysian-politicians-use-big-data-to-profile-you>

A pro-Opposition data analytics start-up, Invoke⁷⁴, is also working with PH candidates for the 14th general election. Invoke founder Rafizi Ramli said his company used phone surveys to get information on voters' political leaning, among other personal details, so that it could identify swing voters to target. Personalised political messages, he said, were not necessary though, as the key was to profile marginal voters, who could be persuaded with similar campaign issues across constituencies.

In conclusion, up until now, the use of voters' personal data in Malaysian political campaigns appears to be minimal, mainly because both BN and the Opposition tend to rely on persuading voters through handouts. Social media was also not very developed back then, with cybertroopers only managing blogs.

But BN's loss of its parliamentary supermajority since 2008, coupled with the massive 1MDB financial scandal and a new rival Malay nationalist party headed by former prime minister Mahathir, may force the coalition to try new tactics in the 14th general election.

⁷⁴ Boo, S.L. (2017, April). How Malaysian politicians use big data to profile you. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/how-malaysian-politicians-use-big-data-to-profile-you>

Case Study: How Barisan Nasional Uses Personal Data

Ahead of the 14th general election, Umno used voters' personal data obtained from government agencies to remind individual voters during campaigning how much aid they received from the Barisan Nasional (BN) government, an Umno leader revealed.

The Umno leader, who requested anonymity, said the ruling party went to the district education offices to get lists of teachers and parents (education is under federal jurisdiction in Malaysia); to the People's Volunteer Corps (RELA), which is under the Home Ministry, for a list of its members; and to other government agencies for a list of recipients of the 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) cash aid; the national poverty database e-Kasih; civil servants; welfare recipients like the disabled and the elderly; recipients of other government aid like in education; and even a list of patients who go to public hospitals.

These personal details were then "merged" to build a profile of the voter and to calculate how much public aid the voter has received.

"This person has school aid, BR1M aid, s/he is also a RELA member, s/he gets an allowance, so we know, of course this person cannot support the Opposition," the Umno leader told the writer in an interview.

"Based on our analysis, if we count 40,000 voters in an area, those who get government aid of these various forms must be more than 60 per cent," he said, adding that this applied even to urban areas.

He pointed out that hospital bills currently spelled out how much treatment was subsidised by the government. (See Figure 1).

"Ward for three days, multiplied by RM150, totals RM450. At the bottom, government subsidy RM350. So total payment RM50," he said. "So when they get the bills, they will realise they got government subsidy."

PERIHAL BAYARAN	KADAR KOS SEBENAR / BIL. UNIT	KOS SEBENAR	KADAR DICAJ / BIL. UNIT	AMAUN DICAJ
Makmal Kod F Total Iron Binding Capacity (TIBC)	30.00/1	30.00	5.00/1	5.00
Makmal Kod G Chloride	10.00/1	10.00	2.00/1	2.00
Creatinine	35.00/1	35.00	2.00/1	2.00
Potassium	10.00/1	10.00	2.00/1	2.00
Sodium	20.00/1	20.00	2.00/1	2.00
Urea	10.00/1	10.00	2.00/1	2.00
Chloride	10.00/1	10.00	2.00/1	2.00
Creatinine	35.00/1	35.00	2.00/1	2.00
Potassium	10.00/1	10.00	2.00/1	2.00
Sodium	20.00/1	20.00	2.00/1	2.00
Urea	10.00/1	10.00	2.00/1	2.00
Idiologi Ray Chest	40.00/1	40.00	10.00/1	10.00
Idiologi Kod Q Digitized General Radiography	100.00/1	100.00	.00/1	0.00
S SEBENAR				2,653.00 DR
MAUN DICAJKAN				109.00 DR
MAUN DEPOSIT				0.00
MAUN PENGECUALIAN/TIDAK DICAJ				0.00 DR
MAUN TUNGGAKAN				0.00
LAH SUBSIDI KERAJAAN				2,544.00 DR
MAUN PERLU DIBAYAR (Bil Semasa + Tunggakan)				109.00

Ringgit Malaysia : Satu Ratus Ser
Sahaja

Figure 1: A medical bill at Hospital Sultanah Bahiyah, a government hospital, totaling RM109 after the deduction of government subsidy of RM2,544 from the original bill of RM2,653. Retrieved from the Malaysian Health Ministry's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/kementeriankesihatanmalaysia/photos/a.390879946236.176260.373560576236/10154138196836237/?type=3&theater>

When asked if Umno had a list of patients at each public hospital (both Health Ministry and university hospitals), he said: "Yes. We look for it lah. Then we get it, those who are hardworking. Those who are not hardworking won't get it."

The Umno leader said that in the previous 13th general election, Umno did not utilise all this data.

"So this GE14, all of this, we have already penetrated," he said. "Big data, active data."

Umno campaigned house to house and explained to voters, after getting all their information, the exact amount of government aid they received, he said.

"Actually, when we surveyed, and when we reminded voters – they said 'Oh, the government doesn't help me lah, this and that'. So we open lah. [We say] 'Don't say like that, Uncle. According to us, you went to hospital this year, three to four times. Actually

you should be paying this much, but because of government subsidy, you got this much. You also have children going to university, two children, they got book vouchers, two people, RM400. You also got BR1M, RM120. Your child in secondary school, we gave RM100 one off. You have four children, RM400. So the amount you got – this is the amount’,” said the Umno leader.

He said sometimes voters did not remember or realise how much help they received from the government.

School-going children of those with a household income of below RM4,000 monthly receive a one-off sum of RM100 each. University students from such families get an RM200 book voucher, said the Umno leader. There are various forms of government aid⁷⁵ provided by the Social Welfare Department too, such as financial assistance for the disabled, senior citizens, underprivileged children, foster children, the bedridden and chronically ill, and unemployed youth, as well as federal and state aid. Single mothers⁷⁶ also receive financial aid from the Women, Family and Community Development Ministry.



Figure 2: BR1M (1Malaysia People's Aid) is a cash aid programme for Malaysians earning RM4,000 and below a month. The deadline for new applications for BR1M 2018 was December 31 2017. Retrieved from BR1M's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/brimonline/>

BR1M (see Figure 2) is a cash aid programme that was started by Prime Minister Najib Razak's administration in 2012, beginning with an RM500 handout to households earning RM3,000 and less. RM2.6 billion was reportedly disbursed to 5.2 million households⁷⁷ in 2012, representing around 80 per cent of Malaysian households. The programme has since

⁷⁵ Department of Social Welfare. Retrieved from <http://www.jkm.gov.my/>

⁷⁶ Joifin, F. (2017 September). 6 government aids you didn't know about in Malaysia. Retrieved from <https://www.comparehero.my/blog/government-aids-didnt-know>

⁷⁷ Najib Razak. 1Malaysia People's Aid; A sincere gesture of the government. Retrieved from https://www.najibrazak.com/en/news_archive/1malaysia-peoples-aid-a-sincere-gesture-of-the-government/

expanded. Currently, eligible recipients of BR1M are households earning RM4,000 and less a month and individuals who earn RM2,000 and less monthly.

For BR1M 2018⁷⁸, households earning RM3,000 and less monthly are eligible to receive RM1,200 cash aid this year, staggered out into three payouts in February, June and August. Households earning between RM3,001 and RM4,000 monthly will get an RM900 staggered payout, while individuals earning RM2,000 and less will get RM450. This year, the first payout of BR1M was credited into successful applicants' bank accounts. Previously, BR1M recipients collected their cash handouts at schools, district offices, and BN parties' premises⁷⁹, with operations overseen by BN politicians⁸⁰ who also coordinated letters of approval⁸¹. However, this year, BR1M aid still continues to be handed out at presentation ceremonies for applicants without bank accounts. A BR1M 2018 presentation ceremony in Baling, Kedah, saw Baling MP Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim⁸², who is from Umno, distributing the aid to Orang Asli (aboriginal), the disabled, senior citizens, and recipients without bank accounts. He said BR1M applicants could check their applications at the community service offices of Members of Parliament and state assemblymen and Umno division offices.

e-Kasih is a national poverty data bank⁸³ created by the Implementation Coordination Unit⁸⁴ (ICU) under the Prime Minister's Department. It is used by various government agencies to ensure fair aid distribution and to prevent any overlaps between programmes, as there are several ministries involved in aid programmes: Ministry of Education; Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development; Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry; Ministry of Rural and Regional Development; Ministry of Federal Territories; and the Ministry of Human Resource. Those eligible for aid under e-Kasih are those who are on the poverty line, as well as urban households earning RM1,500 or less a month, and rural households earning RM1,000 or less a month. Households with a monthly income of less than RM2,300 are also eligible to register. Citizens cannot register themselves (initially, they could); they must contact the ICU, the state development office, or the federal development department (poverty eradication unit).

e-Kasih reportedly contains personal information⁸⁵ of the individual poor and hardcore poor like the federal and state constituency they reside in, residential address, education, skills and employment, property ownership, health status, and income. The databank also contains data on the type and amount of aid received by the applicants and updates on any income changes. Hardcore poor are those with a household income of RM660 (EUR 138) or less a month, while the poor have a household income of RM990 (EUR 207) and below⁸⁶.

⁷⁸ BR1M. Retrieved from https://ebr1m.hasil.gov.my/manualPengguna/Template_BR1M2018New.pdf

⁷⁹ Hong, B. (2018 February). BR1M recipients get their first portion. Retrieved from <https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/39993/>

⁸⁰ Chong, K. Y. and Sharma, M.S. (2017 February). Brimming with joy. Retrieved from <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/community/2017/02/28/brimming-with-joy-eligible-recipients-throng-centres-to-collect-annual-aid/>

⁸¹ Borneo Post Online (2013, February). BR1M 2.0 distribution at Miri Civic Centre a smooth process. Retrieved from <http://www.theborneopost.com/2013/02/06/br1m-2-0-distribution-at-miri-civic-centre-a-smooth-process/>

⁸² Malay Mail (2018 March). Orang Asli community welcomes BR1M, hopes for its continuity. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/orang-asli-community-welcomes-br1m-hopes-for-its-continuity>

⁸³ E-Government for Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific. eKasih National Poverty Data Bank, Malaysia. Retrieved from <http://egov4women.unescapsdd.org/case-studies/ekasih-national-poverty-data-bank-malaysia>

⁸⁴ EKasih. Retrieved from <https://ekasih.icu.gov.my/Pages/Default.aspx>

⁸⁵ E-Government for Women's Empowerment in Asia and the Pacific. eKasih National Poverty Data Bank, Malaysia. Retrieved from <http://egov4women.unescapsdd.org/case-studies/ekasih-national-poverty-data-bank-malaysia>

⁸⁶ Borneo Post Online (2017, March). 41,836 households above poverty line – Fatimah. Retrieved from <http://www.theborneopost.com/2017/03/30/41836-households-above-poverty-line-fatimah/>

SENARAI HARGA DAFTAR PEMILIH TERKINI UNTUK SUKU TAHUN 4/2017

SELANGOR		PEMILIH	HARGA
P.092	SABAK BERNAM		
N.01	SUNGAI AIR TAWAR	16,314	RM66.60
N.02	SABAK	24,641	RM100.00
JUMLAH BAGI PARLIMEN P.092		40,955	RM 166.60
P.093	SUNGAI BESAR		
N.03	SUNGAI PANJANG	30,716	RM125.00
N.04	SEKINCHAN	18,137	RM73.60
JUMLAH BAGI PARLIMEN P.093		48,853	RM 198.60
P.094	HULU SELANGOR		
N.05	HULU BERNAM	22,921	RM93.20
N.06	KUALA KUBU BAHARU	29,338	RM118.80
N.07	BATANG KALI	48,908	RM198.00
JUMLAH BAGI PARLIMEN P.094		101,167	RM 410.00

Figure 3: Screenshot of prices of Selangor constituencies. Title: List of prices of the latest electoral roll for Quarter 4 of 2017. “Pemilih” refers to the number of voters. “Harga” means the price. “Jumlah bagi Parliamen P.092” means “Total for Parliament P.092”, ie: the price for the roll for the P.092 Parliament seat of Sabak Bernam. The seats under Sabak Bernam (N.01 and No.02) respectively are state seats. Retrieved from http://spr.gov.my/sites/default/files/HargaDPI_ST_4.2017.pdf

Umno also obtains the Election Commission’s (EC) electoral roll, released each quarter, which contains a voter’s name, identity card (IC) number, district polling station, gender, and complete residential address, said the Umno leader. The electoral roll (see Figure 3) can be purchased⁸⁷ by anybody, usually political parties, according to the EC.

He said Umno would do “Ops Jejak” to visit voters based on the electoral roll and get their IC number (see Figure 4), phone number, social media accounts, where their children live, political inclination, and any issues they face, an exercise done every six months by Umno Youth for voters aged below 40, Puteri Umno for young women, and Wanita Umno and division leaders for the rest. Umno’s wings – Youth, Puteri and Wanita – refer to young men, young women, and women in the party.

⁸⁷ Senarai Harga Daftar Pemilih Terkini Untuk Suku Tahun 4/2-17. Retrieved from http://www.spr.gov.my/sites/default/files/HargaDPI_ST_4.2017.pdf



Figure 4: Sample MyKad. Retrieved from <https://www.lowyat.net/2017/148361/data-breach-fallout-time-review-malaysian-mykad-number/>

The Umno leader said the objective of the house-to-house survey was to identify white (supporters), black (opponents) and grey (fence-sitters) voters. He estimated that voters who could not be tracked (for example, someone who worked elsewhere) amounted to 20 to 25 per cent of a constituency, while the remaining 80 per cent could be entirely covered by Umno due to its immense machinery. Umno has a branch at each district polling station, except for Sarawak. Some branches, he said, only needed to take care of 100 or 120 voters, so they could complete house visits in two to three days.

During the house visits to voters, Umno members would try to identify voters' political leaning through indirect questions like: "Are you okay? Are your children in school okay? Do you have government aid or not? What else do you think the government should be doing?"

"Based on their answers, we will know if they support the government or not," the Umno leader said.

Voters classified as "white" might give answers like: "Before this, I never got. Now each year, Najib gives us BR1M. Even though people say it is sweets, but I never got before during Mahathir's time, but now I got".



Figure 5: Former Malaysia Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad turned Opposition Leader. Retrieved from Mahathir Mohamad's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/TunDrMahathir/>

The Umno leader was referring to former prime minister turned Opposition Leader Mahathir Mohamad (see Figure 5).

The Umno leader said for fence-sitters or potential supporters (classified as “grey”), they might say something like: “This BR1M is just sweets. What lah. They should be teaching us how to fish, not give us fish”.

“Black” voters would not let BN survey takers enter their home. He noted also that ethnic Chinese voters were often reluctant to allow home visits from survey takers.

The Umno leader said about 70 per cent of the data collected from house visits was reliable, noting that some survey participants were reluctant to tell everything.

He said Umno did not have geolocation data traced from one’s mobile phone, but such information was possessed by the National Security Council for anti-terrorism purposes in light of the Islamic State threat.

“Sometimes for political purposes, they might use, though. We don’t know,” said the Umno leader.

“If Najib wants to see where Mahathir is now, he can ask MKN, but Umno doesn’t have (this data). Our security agencies have it.”

MKN is the Malay initial for the National Security Council.

When asked if the National Security Council shared such data with Umno, the Umno leader said: “I don’t know. The MKN chairman is Najib. If the PM says ‘I want this information’, they might give. But for us, we can’t have it.”

Umno would use the information gleaned from house surveys to create a map and provide transport to “white” voters during polling day from morning till noon, even in huge constituencies in the cities.

“We have cars and motorbikes,” said the Umno leader.

For online campaigning, the Umno leader said the respective branch leaders in his party would have their own WhatsApp groups in their district polling station for “white” and “grey” voters based on the house surveys, mainly to give information on current issues or to spread political messages. Umno has an information technology (IT) chief in each district polling station. If a district polling station has a 1,000 voters, there will be five WhatsApp groups containing 200 voters each.

Umno similarly had Facebook groups, he said, divided into an Umno leader’s personal group, district polling station, and division in the party. The ruling party seldom used Telegram for campaigning, said the Umno leader. Microtargeting will be used on Facebook to identify local issues in a constituency.

“We’ll compare apple to apple. (For example) what PR [Pakatan] has done in Segambut compared to BN. BN does this and that. For you, the water issue also hasn’t been resolved,” said the Umno leader, referring to frequent water disruption problems in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor. The PKR-DAP-PAS coalition retained Selangor in the 2013 election.

Tracking voters in groups of 30

Umno also has a “Jalinan Rakyat Plus” programme, where certain Umno members track or “take care” of 30 voters each, also known as the previously-mentioned “Ops Jejak” under Umno Youth. These leaders are called K30, short for “Ketua 30” (Leader of 30).

“They will make friends, create WhatsApp and Facebook groups etc, whatever information they get, we give,” said the Umno leader.

He declined to elaborate further on what Umno members did in the “Jalinan Rakyat Plus/ Ops Jejak” programmes, citing party secrets.

Umno has more than three million members, he said. One Umno branch may have 100 members, for example, but there may be 500 residents in that village. The remaining 400 villagers who are not Umno members will be included in the “Ops Jejak” programme.

According to the Umno leader, house visits would be done more frequently in the years closer to the election, depending on locality. If electoral chances were good, it would be done less frequently, but if indicators were not very good, follow-ups would be required, especially for fence-sitters. “Black” voters would be left alone.

An Umno K30 from Hulu Klang in Selangor, who requested anonymity, said he was the “go to guy” for 30 registered voters in his area. His group members are all Umno members.

“I will share the information on the election and issues relating to the election or Umno. I will also be ensuring that the voters will go out and vote on the Election Day. For example, if they don’t have transportation on Election Day, they would inform me and I would get the elections machinery to fetch them,” he told the writer.

He said K30 was an initiative under Umno’s Jalinan Rakyat Plus programme launched in April 2017. The 2018 general election has been touted the “mother of all elections”⁸⁸, after BN lost its parliamentary supermajority in 2008 for the first time since 1969, and ceded further seats in the 2013 election. BN (and its predecessor, the Alliance) has never lost a general election in the history of the country. In 2008, BN lost its customary two-thirds majority in Parliament, which had enabled it to amend the Federal Constitution as it wished, and five states – Perak, Selangor, Penang, Kelantan, and Kedah – when PKR, DAP and PAS contested the general election in straight fights against BN. The three parties then formed Pakatan Rakyat. In 2013, BN lost the popular vote to Pakatan Rakyat and even more seats, bagging 133 out of 222 parliament seats, besides failing to regain Selangor, Penang, and Kelantan. Selangor and Penang’s chief ministers are from PKR and DAP respectively, while the east coast state of Kelantan has been under PAS since 1990.

“I started engaging the voters around August 2017. I don’t meet them constantly. We communicate mostly through WhatsApp and calls,” he said, adding that they talked mostly about government policies and initiatives.

“Other than that, mostly answering their questions on current issues,” he said.

The K30 said the only data he collected on his 30 voters was if they were changing constituencies or if they had questions about Umno, which he would then pass to his superior in his party division.



Figure 6: Umno information technology and social bureau chairman Ahmad Maslan. Retrieved from Ahmad Maslan's Facebook page
https://www.facebook.com/ahmadmaslan?hc_ref=ARQZEPQ7fy87mVtofukDkPyoQWyc3Op3jM_PEOpjh6gru2vFS-eqjTTr3BI7sZG2uyk

⁸⁸ Tan, J. (2018, April). Mother of all elections begins. Retrieved from
<https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/analysis/2018/04/08/mother-of-all-elections-begins-parliament-has-been-dissolved-the-action-will-be-in-the-malay-heartla/>

According to Umno information technology and social media bureau chairman Ahmad Maslan (see Figure 6), the party's Jalinan Rakyat Plus programme, where party members monitor 30 voters each, is to study voter attitude and to categorise areas according to their support for BN – white, grey and black areas. Campaigning would be focused on fence-sitters (grey), less so for white, while black areas would be completely ignored.

Under the Jalinan Rakyat Plus programme, Umno members, known as K30, monitor 30 voters each, who are their neighbours. Umno has 22,000 branches under 191 divisions throughout the country except for Sarawak; there are 3.5 million members in the party, according to Ahmad. Each branch has at least 50 Umno members, but not all members of a branch are appointed as K30 as it depends on the size of the electorate in a district polling station.

“It depends on the number of voters there. Divided by 30 – that's the size of the JR machinery,” Ahmad told the writer in an interview. “Most of the army is women”.

The Jalinan Rakyat Plus programme monitors voters across race as it has non-Malay K30 too from other BN component parties, Ahmad said. BN, which has 13 component parties, is led by Umno. The race-based coalition's main parties representing Malays, Chinese, and Indians in Malaysia are Umno, MCA and MIC.

Ahmad said the data collected by K30 is mainly on voters' political leaning and contact details like phone numbers, as well as personal information like their occupation, education level, and number of children.

“The data is 90 per cent reliable,” said Ahmad, adding that such information is collected nearer to the election, like six months before polling date.

Umno Youth vice chief Khairul Azwan Harun⁸⁹ said in April 2017 that the kind of data Umno members collected on voters were the name of their spouse, the number of spouses and children, occupation, children's place of education, and even which stall they hang out at.

Senior Umno leader denies using government data

Ahmad, however, claimed that his party did not access voters' personal data from government agencies.

“We collect the information from village heads; we don't go to government departments and request for it,” he said.

“Village heads know a lot about everyone in their village – who gets e-Kasih, who gets JKM (Social Welfare Department), they know everything, who gets BR1M, they know everything.”

When asked about urban constituencies with a huge population, Ahmad admitted that it was difficult to get information on welfare recipients.

⁸⁹ Boo, S.L. (2017 April). BN reveals art of targeting voters. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/bn-reveals-art-of-targeting-voters>

“For urban areas, we depend on the ‘Jawatankuasa Perwakilan Penduduk’,” he said, referring to the Residents’ Representatives Committees⁹⁰ set up in local council areas throughout the country under the federal Ministry of Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government, purportedly to assist local councils as areas like security, education, health and transport are under federal jurisdiction.

There are no local council elections in Malaysia. The Kuala Lumpur City Hall is controlled by the Federal Territories Ministry and the KL Mayor is appointed by the federal government, whereas local councils and mayors in other states are controlled and appointed by the state government. In the 13th general election in 2013, BN failed to retake Selangor, Penang and Kelantan. Selangor and Penang are under Pakatan administrations with a PKR and DAP chief minister respectively, while Kelantan is run by Islamist party PAS.

On online campaigning, Ahmad said he was currently in 991 WhatsApp groups, remarking that it was “probably the highest in the world.”

These WhatsApp groups are mostly internal Umno groups comprising party members, but other Umno members have their own WhatsApp groups comprising non-party members too, like in their villages, party branch area, and school alumni, he said.

Ahmad said IT bureaus in each of the 191 Umno divisions had its own communication channels, be they Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, or Telegram, to highlight leaders they wanted to promote, development projects in the area, and problems they wanted to solve.

“Most popular is Facebook and WhatsApp,” he said.

⁹⁰ FAQ on the formation of residents’ representatives. Retrieved from <http://jpp.kpkt.gov.my/>



Figure 7: An infographic posted on Ahmad Maslan's Facebook page on March 27 2018 about the Prime Minister's explanation on the 1MDB scandal, GST (goods and services tax), and the country's debt. Retrieved from <https://www.facebook.com/ahmadmaslan/posts/10204768843576999>

He added that he himself posted 30 political messages, a mix of graphics (see Figure 7) and videos, on social media daily. Other messages about BN are also posted by Umno Youth, Wanita and Puteri. Ahmad's Facebook page features plenty of wordy infographics with pro-BN messages and criticism of the Opposition.

"Now, we are winning the war – we are winning the social media war," said Ahmad, adding that Umno did not pay for any Facebook advertisements.

A video circulating on WhatsApp in March claimed the Chinese-dominant DAP wanted to split up the Malays, eradicate Bumiputera rights, and take over the economy.



Video 1: An anti-DAP video circulating on WhatsApp accuses the Chinese-dominant party of planning to split up the Malays, of propagating the eradication of Bumiputera rights, and of being the true power behind Pakatan Harapan. Source forthcoming

Ahmad also said pro-Umno bloggers were still around, a fixture in the early 2000s, and active in various social media groups.

Video campaigns, however, were dependent on locality.

“Some areas don’t want their data to finish, so they don’t watch videos. If they see if it’s heavy data, they’ll delete. Or if it buffers, they don’t want to wait,” said Ahmad.

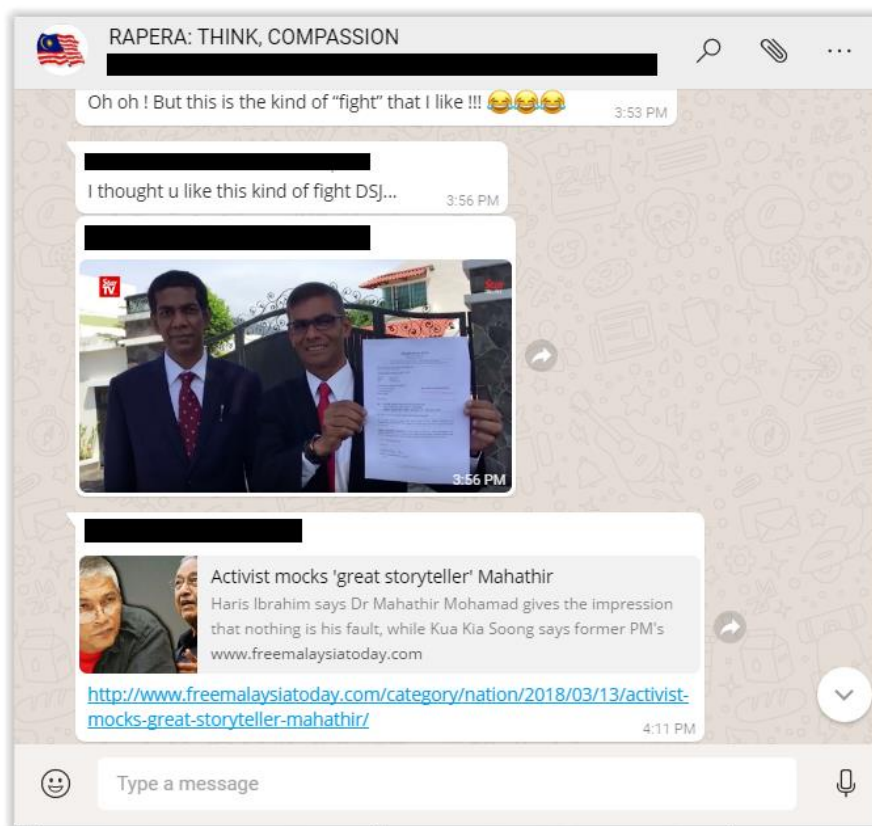


Figure 8: A screenshot of a WhatsApp group, which contains ordinary citizens and a few politicians, that mainly discusses current issues.

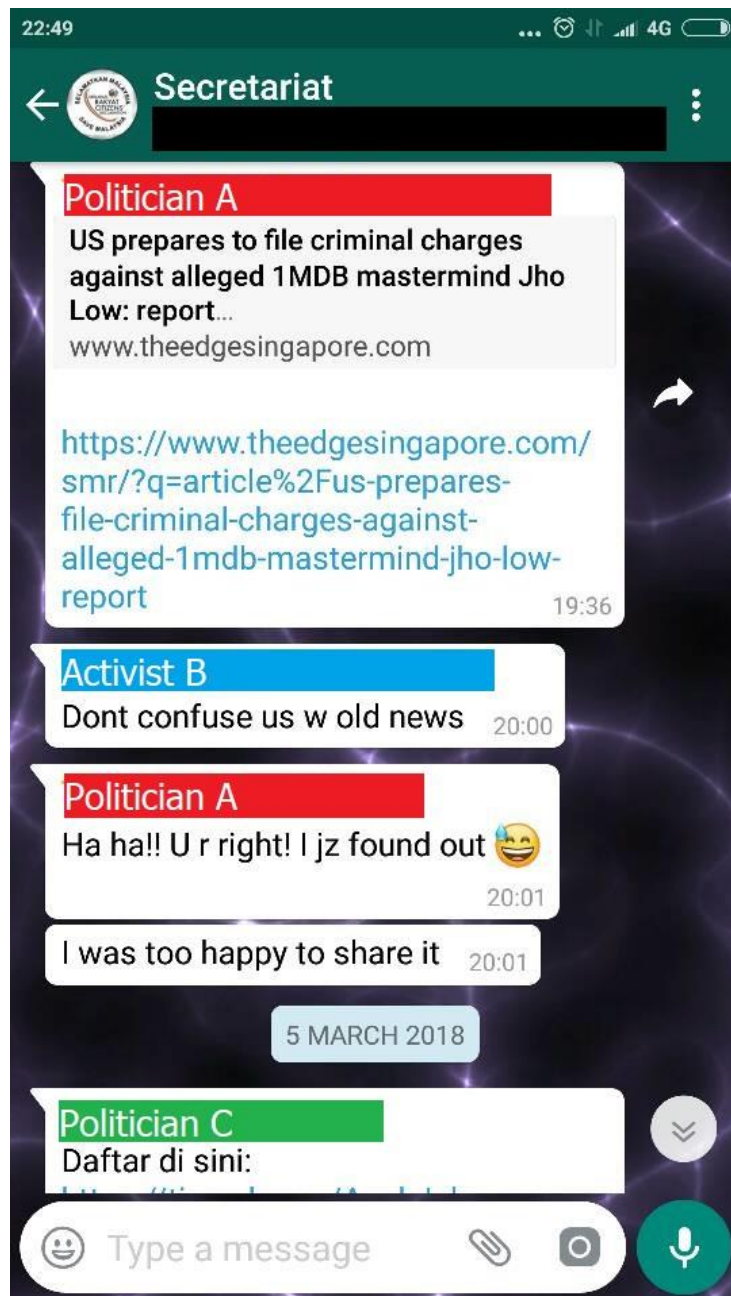


Figure 9: A screenshot of a WhatsApp group containing Pakatan Harapan politicians and activists, in which a Pakatan Harapan politician is sharing a March 22, 2017 report on US preparing to file criminal charges against alleged 1MDB mastermind Jho Low. Pakatan Harapan is the main Opposition coalition comprising the People's Justice Party (PKR), the Democratic Action Party (DAP), and two new parties – Malaysian United Indigenous Party (PPBM) and National Trust Party (Amanah). Pakatan Harapan is led by PPBM chairman and former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad.

Malay Mail Online reported⁹¹ in April 2017 that BN parties primarily used WhatsApp and Facebook for political messaging in both rural and urban areas in the peninsula. This is a form of more “targeted” political advertising, since there are WhatsApp groups (see Figure 8) and Facebook pages or groups for various communities, including the local surau and parent-teacher associations, and specific interest groups (see Figure 9). BN parties also reportedly said they often conducted voter surveys with more than 10,000 respondents at a time to identify voters’ opinion on issues like the goods and services tax (GST), their

⁹¹ Boo, S.L. (2017 April). BN reveals art of targeting voters. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/bn-reveals-art-of-targeting-voters>

political inclination, and basic personal information like name, age, residential address, income, and education level.

Inland Revenue Board denies giving data to political parties

The Inland Revenue Board (LHDN), which manages the BR1M cash aid, denied sharing information with political parties.

“BR1M data is not shared with political parties,” LHDN corporate communications CEO Masrun Maslim told the writer.

When pointed out that Umno and Gerakan leaders have told the writer that they had data on BR1M recipients, Masrun said: “You can ask them back what kind of data they have. I don’t have any more comments. LHDN do not involve in politics and please don’t politicise everything [sic]. Thank you.”

SENARAI PENERIMA BANTUAN RAKYAT MALAYSIA 2017 FASA 1					
NEGERI: PERAK		PARLIMEN: P74 - LUMUT		DUN: N51 - PASIR PANJANG	
No.	No. KP Penerima	No. Rujukan	Nama	Alamat	No. Telefon Rumah / No. Telefon Bimbit
1	2000000001	KAT1-B-000001 (PERAK)	ABDULLAH BINTI MOHD NUR	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000001 / 0169000001
2	2000000002	KAT1-B-000002 (PERAK)	COO PAUL TONG	KAT1 JALAN 501/107 PASIR 112, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000002 / 0169000002
3	2000000003	KAT1-B-000003 (PERAK)	LING LING LING	NO 17 TAMAN MELATI PUNCI, 35000 LUMUT PERAK	0169000003 / 0169000003
4	2000000004	KAT1-B-000004 (PERAK)	ABDUL KAFI KAHARUN	LOT 111 NO 10 DATO BERNAMANG PERAK, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000004 / 0169000004
5	2000000005	KAT1-B-000005 (PERAK)	RAHMAN BINTI ITAM TALLA	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000005 / 0169000005
6	2000000006	KAT1-B-000006 (PERAK)	UTAMA BIN UTAMA	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000006 / 0169000006
7	2000000007	KAT1-B-000007 (PERAK)	KUZA BIN MOHD	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000007 / 0169000007
8	2000000008	KAT1-B-000008 (PERAK)	ABD YUSUF MOHD	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000008 / 0169000008
9	2000000009	KAT1-B-000009 (PERAK)	CHANDI BINTI SAUD	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000009 / 0169000009
10	2000000010	KAT1-B-000010 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000010 / 0169000010
11	2000000011	KAT1-B-000011 (PERAK)	FLORANCE THEODORA SANTOSO	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000011 / 0169000011
12	2000000012	KAT1-B-000012 (PERAK)	THOMAS BINTI KUP	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000012 / 0169000012
13	2000000013	KAT1-B-000013 (PERAK)	MURRAY BINTI MOHD NUR	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000013 / 0169000013
14	2000000014	KAT1-B-000014 (PERAK)	DIK KUN NIN	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000014 / 0169000014
15	2000000015	KAT1-B-000015 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000015 / 0169000015
16	2000000016	KAT1-B-000016 (PERAK)	OO CHENG KIM	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000016 / 0169000016
17	2000000017	KAT1-B-000017 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000017 / 0169000017
18	2000000018	KAT1-B-000018 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000018 / 0169000018
19	2000000019	KAT1-B-000019 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000019 / 0169000019
20	2000000020	KAT1-B-000020 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000020 / 0169000020
21	2000000021	KAT1-B-000021 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000021 / 0169000021
22	2000000022	KAT1-B-000022 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000022 / 0169000022
23	2000000023	KAT1-B-000023 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000023 / 0169000023
24	2000000024	KAT1-B-000024 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000024 / 0169000024
25	2000000025	KAT1-B-000025 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000025 / 0169000025
26	2000000026	KAT1-B-000026 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000026 / 0169000026
27	2000000027	KAT1-B-000027 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000027 / 0169000027
28	2000000028	KAT1-B-000028 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000028 / 0169000028
29	2000000029	KAT1-B-000029 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000029 / 0169000029
30	2000000030	KAT1-B-000030 (PERAK)	LOH KAI TONG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000030 / 0169000030

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SENARAI PENERIMA BANTUAN RAKYAT MALAYSIA 2017 FASA 1					
NEGERI: PERAK		PARLIMEN: P74 - LUMUT		DUN: N51 - PASIR PANJANG	
No.	No. KP Penerima	No. Rujukan	Nama	Alamat	No. Telefon Rumah / No. Telefon Bimbit
31	2000000031	KAT1-B-000031 (PERAK)	YUSUF BAKAR	NO 10 PERUMAHAN VINCE KATTA, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000031 / 0169000031
32	2000000032	KAT1-B-000032 (PERAK)	EMERAT BINTI PASIR PANJANG	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000032 / 0169000032
33	2000000033	KAT1-B-000033 (PERAK)	RAHMAN BINTI KUP	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000033 / 0169000033
34	2000000034	KAT1-B-000034 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000034 / 0169000034
35	2000000035	KAT1-B-000035 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000035 / 0169000035
36	2000000036	KAT1-B-000036 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000036 / 0169000036
37	2000000037	KAT1-B-000037 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000037 / 0169000037
38	2000000038	KAT1-B-000038 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000038 / 0169000038
39	2000000039	KAT1-B-000039 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000039 / 0169000039
40	2000000040	KAT1-B-000040 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000040 / 0169000040
41	2000000041	KAT1-B-000041 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000041 / 0169000041
42	2000000042	KAT1-B-000042 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000042 / 0169000042
43	2000000043	KAT1-B-000043 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000043 / 0169000043
44	2000000044	KAT1-B-000044 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000044 / 0169000044
45	2000000045	KAT1-B-000045 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000045 / 0169000045
46	2000000046	KAT1-B-000046 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000046 / 0169000046
47	2000000047	KAT1-B-000047 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000047 / 0169000047
48	2000000048	KAT1-B-000048 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000048 / 0169000048
49	2000000049	KAT1-B-000049 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000049 / 0169000049
50	2000000050	KAT1-B-000050 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000050 / 0169000050

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SENARAI PENERIMA BANTUAN RAKYAT MALAYSIA 2017 FASA 1					
NEGERI: PERAK		PARLIMEN: P74 - LUMUT		DUN: N51 - PASIR PANJANG	
No.	No. KP Penerima	No. Rujukan	Nama	Alamat	No. Telefon Rumah / No. Telefon Bimbit
51	2000000051	KAT1-B-000051 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000051 / 0169000051
52	2000000052	KAT1-B-000052 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000052 / 0169000052
53	2000000053	KAT1-B-000053 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000053 / 0169000053
54	2000000054	KAT1-B-000054 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000054 / 0169000054
55	2000000055	KAT1-B-000055 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000055 / 0169000055
56	2000000056	KAT1-B-000056 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000056 / 0169000056
57	2000000057	KAT1-B-000057 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000057 / 0169000057
58	2000000058	KAT1-B-000058 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000058 / 0169000058
59	2000000059	KAT1-B-000059 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000059 / 0169000059
60	2000000060	KAT1-B-000060 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000060 / 0169000060
61	2000000061	KAT1-B-000061 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000061 / 0169000061
62	2000000062	KAT1-B-000062 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000062 / 0169000062
63	2000000063	KAT1-B-000063 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000063 / 0169000063
64	2000000064	KAT1-B-000064 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000064 / 0169000064
65	2000000065	KAT1-B-000065 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000065 / 0169000065
66	2000000066	KAT1-B-000066 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000066 / 0169000066
67	2000000067	KAT1-B-000067 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000067 / 0169000067
68	2000000068	KAT1-B-000068 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000068 / 0169000068
69	2000000069	KAT1-B-000069 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000069 / 0169000069
70	2000000070	KAT1-B-000070 (PERAK)	CHONG KAI HOH	NO 10 KAMPUNG TELUK PERANGKAL PASIR PANJANG LAUT, 35000 BERNAMANG PERAK	0169000070 / 0169000070

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Figure 10: A file titled “List of recipients of Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia 2017 Phase 1” that apparently shows names, police or military IC numbers, addresses, and mobile or home phone numbers for the state constituency of Pasir Panjang in Perak. Credit: Shown by an Opposition MP who says he received the list on WhatsApp.

An Opposition MP showed the writer a file titled “List of recipients of Bantuan Rakyat 1 Malaysia 2017 Phase 1” (see Figure 10) that claimed to show names, addresses, and mobile or home phone numbers for the state constituency of Pasir Panjang in Perak. The MP said he had received the list on WhatsApp.

Health Minister S. Subramaniam and Health director-general Noor Hisham Abdullah did not answer questions on whether the Health Ministry gave BN a list of patients that went to its hospitals, together with copies of patients’ bills. Questions to the Ministry of Higher Education’s corporate communications head on whether the ministry gave BN a list of patients that went to university hospitals were not answered.

Umno and MIC leaders have said they have access to national poverty databank e-Kasih. A question to an email address at the ICU in the Prime Minister’s Department, which was given to the writer who had called for information on its hotline, about whether it gave e-Kasih data to BN also went unanswered.

Sometimes, all voters need is a wheelchair



Figure 11: MIC Youth chief C. Sivarraajh hands out goods to people in a photo posted on March 25 2018. Retrieved from Sivarraajh Chandran's Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/Sivarraajh/>

MIC Youth chief C. Sivarraajh (see Figure 11) said his party did house surveys about once a year by visiting voters on the electoral roll to verify their details and to get further information, such as their phone number, email address, number of children, if they had disabled family members, what kind of financial assistance they were getting, occupation, and education background. MIC service centres will also verify voters’ data whenever they visit.

Separate surveys run by MIC's "war room" are to identify voters' level of support for them and to classify "white", "black" and "grey" areas," he said.

"We have an online system. We can view real-time changes in that data," Sivarraajh told the writer.

He said data in the electoral roll was "not reliable at all", noting that the EC would sometimes "register 20 voters in one house" when voters are shifted.

"So SPR is just to check the names lah, but other data is from our own database," he said, using the Malay initials for EC. "Better to check house to house."

He said there were only 1.1 million Indian voters in the country, 80 per cent of which MIC had data on, with local party leaders having further knowledge about these voters.

"If let's say you go to Kedah, Bukit Selambau, Bukit Selambau chairman Youth, Wanita, we'll know exactly how many houses, households is there, how many people are our supporters, how many people are not our supporters, what they do, what is their education background, everything."

Sivarraajh said previously⁹² in April 2017 that he could get details of any Indian family anywhere "within five minutes".

"There are cases of people kidnapped – within an hour, we managed to get back the victim. So this is the network that we have," he was quoted saying.

He had also said since 2013, MIC has been using data analytics and PR services by consultants working on a volunteer basis.

The MIC Youth chief told the writer that MIC knew who BR1M recipients were and who were eligible for the aid but had not yet registered for it.

"For BR1M, we know exactly in that 'kawasan' (constituency), about 200 people are qualified, but only 150 registered, so that means we have to look for another 50," he said. "This big data is very helpful."

"Now Pemuda MIC is giving us 10 'kerusi roda' (wheelchairs). From this data, I know exactly how many people need 'kerusi roda OKU (disabled)'. So from that which is very critical, I say these 10 units, you 'hantar sana' (send there). This kind of thing."

In terms of identifying voters' level of support for MIC, Sivarraajh said his party would also try to find out why voters were unhappy with them, which could be something as simple as not getting a wheelchair.

"It could be a simple matter like 'kerusi roda', they don't receive after so many times they ask. So this is the time for us to deliver, so they'll be back with us. Many factors lah. This data is very helpful to me," he said.

MIC focuses on the B40 and M40 groups, said Sivarraajh, referring to the bottom 40 per cent and middle 40 per cent of income earners in the country. The Indian BN component

⁹² Boo, S.L. (2017 April). BN reveals art of targeting voters. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/bn-reveals-art-of-targeting-voters>

party identifies the B40 through the government's poverty database, e-Kasih, he said.

"If you look at the data from the government, e-Kasih, their 'gaji only kurang' (salary is less than) RM3,000, but when you go to their houses, you can see they're earning more than that," he said.

When asked if MIC took data from government departments like e-Kasih, Sivarraajh said: "Yeah, e-Kasih you have to compare, to get this B40 group."

When asked if MIC campaigned to people registered under e-Kasih, Sivarraajh said: "Obviously as a political party, you're a loser if you're not doing that, but our main intention is to engage with them and to check whether they received this BR1M, all the 'bantuan-bantuan kerajaan, perumahan' (government aid, housing), everything, because they need help. And I would say this B40 is hardened supporter of Barisan Nasional and MIC. So it's our duty to take care of them."

On Facebook campaigning, Sivarraajh said Facebook advertisements would be targeted based on the location of voters, adding that he spent RM200 per advertisement.

"We try to promote our page to local residents. Automatically there will be people adding you. In Cameron Highlands, average a day, I receive 10 messages from Cameron Highlands. It's a good sign. That means Cameron people have started using Facebook to communicate with me."



Figure 12: MIC Youth chief C. Sivarraajh visits SJKC Kea Farm in Cameron Highlands, a Chinese primary school, together with an MCA representative and donates RM50,000 to build a hall. MCA and MIC are component parties in the ruling BN representing the Chinese and Indians respectively. In Election 2013⁹³, Chinese comprised 32 per cent of the electorate, Indians 12 per cent, Malays 34 per cent, and others 21 per cent. Cameron Highlands is a traditional MIC seat. Retrieved from Sivarraajh Chandran's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Sivarraajh/posts/1657894234304506>

⁹³ Undi.info. Retrieved from <https://undi.info/pahang/r18/P78>

He said political messages on Facebook had to look attractive, catchy and colourful. Most of his messages were in the form of videos (see Video 2) and graphics (see Figure 12).



Video 2: Mesra Rakyat video-programme and Awareness Campaign Empower ECER Cameron Highlands. Retrieved from Sivarraajh Chandran's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Sivarraajh/videos/1656257827801480/>

“It’s not a direct message saying ‘We’re from BN, you must vote us’. It’s indirect. You must be creative.”

Sivarraajh said MIC also had various WhatsApp groups based on age and locality.

“If I go to Tanah Rata, I’ll blast my programme in Tanah Rata to the Tanah Rata people so they can join me. WhatsApp group is very effective. But it has to be creative as well lah. You give them three seconds to digest the whole thing. It cannot be too wordy. At the same time, it cannot be...long video kind of thing. Short, simple and sharp.”

Birthday greeting texts to voters (who like it)



Figure 13: Gerakan vice president Dominic Lau. Retrieved from Dominic Lau Hoe Chai's Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/dominiclauhc>

Gerakan vice president Dominic Lau (see Figure 13), who is the Gerakan service centre coordinator in the federal Batu constituency in Kuala Lumpur, said his party could receive a list of 8,000 Rela members in his constituency from the paramilitary civil volunteer corps, containing their names, IC numbers and phone numbers. Gerakan is one of BN's component parties that does not place racial restrictions on its membership, but its members are mostly Chinese.

"When you say government, only Rela, because I've attended many Rela programmes," Lau told the writer, when asked if Gerakan received government data.

"Our main objective is to try to get them to support us, this is one, and second is, whatever programmes, we're trying to engage them also."

He also said Gerakan used to get data on between 4,000 and 5,000 BR1M recipients when it previously helped to distribute BR1M vouchers and assist recipients in their applications for the aid. BR1M data was provided by LHDN before the 13th general election, said Lau. Now, however, BR1M is credited directly into recipients' bank accounts.

"Last time we had to distribute the voucher. That time we can get the data. But now we don't have. We do that to get the data when we help the people to fill up the forms, to

update, then we can have the data,” said Lau.

He said the BR1M data he had previously included applicants’ names, phone numbers and IC numbers, which he categorised according to their birthdays. (The first six digits of an IC number is one’s date of birth). A Malaysian citizen’s name, especially for the major ethnic groups Malay, Chinese and Indian, is often indicative of their ethnicity.

Lau said for the past five years, he has been sending SMSes to these Batu voters to give birthday wishes or seasonal greetings during major festivals.

“When I walk into the ‘pasar’ (market) in Batu, they will come to you and say ‘thank you for your birthday greeting’, so that means it’s effective. ‘Every year without fail, you send birthday wish.’”

He added that during campaigning in the 14th general election, he will SMS these voters and ask them to support his party, noting that not everyone had WhatsApp.



Figure 14: Gerakan vice president Dominic Lau at a Chinese New Year open house by the Taman Tasik Indah Mewah residents association. Retrieved from Dominic Lau Hoe Chai's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/DominicLauHoeChai/posts/2073102322705744>

Lau admitted, however, that his BN component party was “very weak” in managing data collected on voters who participate in the party’s programmes and activities (see Figure 14).

“Sometimes we key in, sometimes we don’t key in, sometimes the phone number is correct, sometimes it’s not correct. It also depends on people who fill up the form, how they handwriting, some people, the old people, they also don’t know what is their handphone number. All sorts. When we go down to the ground, we face all these problems,” he said.

On Facebook campaigning, Lau said besides targeting advertisements based on location, he also set targeting according to language – Chinese, English and Bahasa Malaysia, as different groups had different issues. He said he spent RM1,000 a month on Facebook

campaigning (see Video 3). Although Gerakan's membership is not race-based, its members are predominantly Chinese.



Video 3: Dominic Lau posts a video of his visit to a night market in his constituency of Batu, where he hands out balloons. Retrieved from Dominic Lau Hoe Chai's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/DominicLauHoeChai/videos/2104455179570458/>

"Our strategy now is to vote on the candidate, rather than party. That's why all the allocations we have, we give it to the coordinator, not to centralise," he said, adding that national-level messaging would be left to BN.

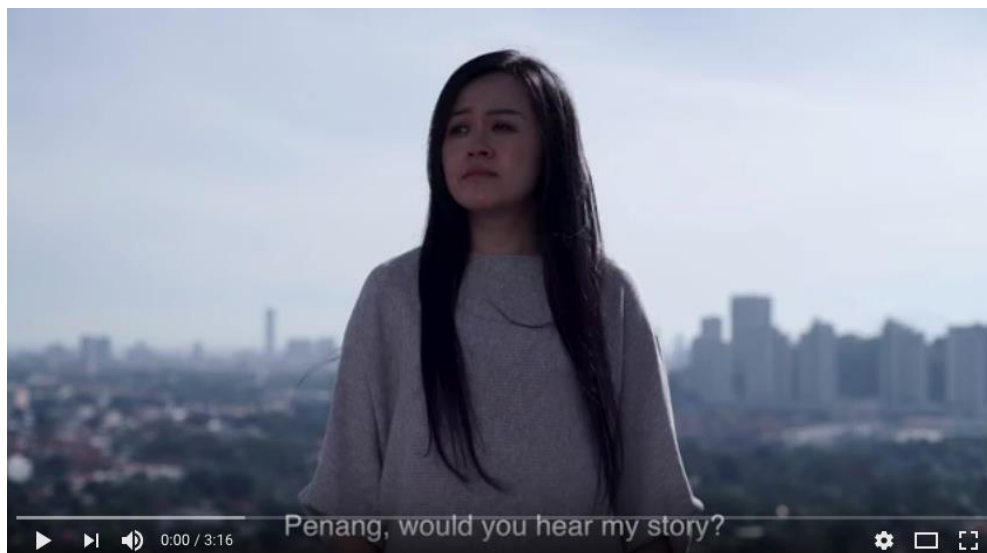
Lau said Gerakan had 300,000 members, with personal information on them like their name, IC address, phone number and address.

"As a coordinator, we focus on Gerakan members first, second is component party members, third is NGO leaders that we have, then only to the 'rakyat' (people)," he said.

"But party members not necessary to vote for you. We have a lot of members in Penang. Why we still lost? If all party members voted Parti Gerakan candidate, we won't get zero," Lau added, referring to the 13th general election when Gerakan failed to win a single seat in Penang.

Gerakan only won a single parliament seat in the 2013 election, as Chinese voters mostly swung towards the Opposition.

Lau said Gerakan also ran surveys through house visits to identify voters' political leaning, but could cover only between 20 and 30 per cent of voters in Kuala Lumpur due to voters' reluctance to participate in the polls. Most of the Gerakan survey takers do not live in the area they run polls on, unlike Umno, said Lau.



Video 4: A Penangite complains that she cannot make ends meet even though she is a senior executive. She also complains about over-development in Penang, high property prices, and frequent floods. She asks: "Isn't 10 years enough?" Retrieved from YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XN_tMr_T3hk

A Mandarin video titled “Penang, would you hear my story?” (see Video 4), which featured a woman complaining about living conditions in Penang since Pakatan took over the state in 2008, went viral in February, but appeared to attract mostly negative comments ⁹⁴about BN instead.



Video 5: MCA video showcasing Malaysia’s history, with a message saying that Malaysia can only progress if there is peace. Comments on the post are mostly negative. Retrieved from MCA’s Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/MCAHQ/videos/1672312852814468/>

⁹⁴ Looi, S.C. (2018 February). Social media users pan ‘Penang woes’ video as propaganda flop. Retrieved from <https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/39685/>

MCA tries to get members to vote BN

An MCA leader, who requested anonymity, said his party would do house visits one to two months before polling day, mainly to keep in touch with its own members and to identify any problems they were facing.

“Our questionnaire is more to [ask them to] support BN,” he said.

He added that MCA (see Video 5), which is a Chinese BN component party, has 1.06 million members. Its membership application form⁹⁵ lists details like name (in English and in Chinese), IC number, mailing address, gender, email address, mobile number, house phone number, languages spoken, occupation, industry, and education level.

When asked if MCA had e-Kasih data or information on BR1M recipients, the MCA leader said: “They won’t give...if the voters we touch, we can get the details, if not, we cannot.”

He said the data collected through MCA’s house visits to voters was just to “solve their problems”.

The MCA leader explained that during house visits near the election, volunteers only had time to ask voters to support BN and to ask what kind of problems they were facing.

“Early morning they will print, what they print is the voter’s slip, voter’s slip will put in the information, name, IC, address, and locality to vote. This one, pass to the voters. When they pass to the voters, they just ask, ‘anything I can help you, any problem you facing?’ After everything distribute, this one complain what, then come back, 6 o’ clock, 8 o’ clock they come back. Then we have meeting. You have to organise the meeting day to day. They come back to the meeting and said today I collect 10 problems. In the meeting, they will solve lah. This one belongs to ‘Ahli Majlis’ (local councillor), tomorrow you go to ‘Majlis’ (local council) to do this, do that, solve the problem. This one wrote complaint letter, solve the problem. This one we can solve directly. Then distribute to everybody, then start tomorrow, will working. This is the normal timetable day to day.”

He said during polling day, each candidate needed 400 to 600 volunteers to do campaigning and to monitor the balloting process, including to check if voters were coming and to arrange transportation, 20 cars, to help send senior citizens and car-less voters to the ballot box.

Transport would be arranged mainly for MCA members. But the MCA leader said during the 12th and 13th general elections, which saw BN losing its parliamentary supermajority, voters refused to pick up the phone when transport arrived, even though they had previously told MCA they needed transport to the ballot box. Due to strong anti-government sentiments among the Chinese, MCA only won seven parliament seats in the 2013 election, compared to Umno that won 88 federal seats.

“They say they need, but when you arrive and when you call them, nobody inside or what. So change a bit lah. That time I think Opposition is too strong already,” the MCA leader said.

⁹⁵ MCA membership form. Retrieved from <http://img.mca.org.my/MCA/article/53967c3d-e1d6-4d4e-a66e-1773975448a6.pdf>

MCA central committee member Ti Lian Ker⁹⁶ said in April 2017 that its party's think tank, INSAP, conducted surveys on voters' stand on issues like the GST and the economy. He also said that his party started big data analytics since the 2014 Kajang by-election.

"Prior to that, big data was very alien to some of the leaders," Ti was quoted saying. "We do not do this just purely to convince, to convert or to con people to support us."

Most Asian countries are data-thin



Figure 15: AutoPolitic founder Roger Do says Malaysia and most Asian countries do not have a lot of data on voters. Credit: Roger Do

AutoPolitic, a political artificial intelligence start-up based in Singapore, said most Asian countries, including Malaysia, did not collect much data on voters or on people's media consumption habits. Electoral rolls in Malaysia only contain the voter's name, IC number, date of birth, gender, and address. AutoPolitic operates in Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Hong Kong.

As such, AutoPolitic said it only had social data, which is information on what people are talking about on social media.

"Unlike in the US where voter registration database is accessible and the consumer data is abundant and up-to-date, most Asian countries are data-thin in this respect," AutoPolitic founder Roger Do (see Figure 15) told the writer, adding that AutoPolitic knew this from experience.

"Social Data from Facebook remains the most coherent and standardised. While there are relevant and useful non-social data about potential voters, they're fragmented, hard-to-access, and data accuracy is both suspect and lagging."

⁹⁶ Boo, S.L. (2017 April). BN reveals art of targeting voters. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/bn-reveals-art-of-targeting-voters>

He pointed out that the United States had data on voters' party affiliation, voting records (whether they voted or not), and address, as well as information on television and media consumption patterns.

He said what AutoPolitic really wanted was voter registration data like that in the US, which can be correlated with the region's historical return to create a model, as well as consumer data like credit card data, credit risk scores, and media consumption habits.

"Adding in consumer data, we can predict attitude based on macro and rolling consumption trend. Basically everything US companies are already doing."

Data on party affiliation and media consumption cannot be obtained by scanning Facebook profiles as that is against Facebook's terms of service, said Do, except for a specific type of permission which AutoPolitic does not deal with.

AutoPolitic, which is working with four political parties and more than 100 federal-level candidates in Malaysia's 14th general election⁹⁷(there are 222 parliament seats in Malaysia), said its clients may give AutoPolitic party members' contact information. The data is uploaded to Facebook so it can be matched up through Facebook's User Directory. The Facebook User Directory contains information filled out by Facebook users themselves.

The data given by political clients is usually a combination of address, phone number, and email address, but fields are usually incomplete and the information outdated.

"The matching part is very precise, but the quality of data uploaded is typically of poor quality, so high rejection rate. Those that does match are pretty much spot on," Do said.

He said currently, AutoPolitic worked with whatever information its clients had at hand, noting that social data was sufficient so far and that user data could be used through Facebook's system.

"In 10 years, that may not be enough," Do said. "Hence why I'm obsessive over micro-tactics, and micro-tactics demands more fine-grained data."

Do said political campaigns on Facebook should not be done like those on traditional media, direct marketing, or banner ads, but noted that most in Malaysia did not fully utilise the social media network's capacity.

"Most campaigns have not adopted social networks as a main strategy, and even less are taking advantage of social intelligence derived from social data," he said, noting that political campaigns in Malaysia generally treated Facebook like a TV channel. When asked if videos of politicians or quote posters were suitable for Facebook advertising, Do said TV ads on social media performed less well than TV ads on TV.

"It's just cheaper, and less effective. So to craft socially useful and viral content, it's a different discipline that political campaigns have not mastered, or even think it exists."

AutoPolitic, he said, extracts meaning and creates a feedback loop through "digital empathy and social intelligence", based on what people are talking about on social media.

⁹⁷ Boo, S.L. (2017 April). How Malaysian politicians use big data to profile you. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/how-malaysian-politicians-use-big-data-to-profile-you>

“Most political campaigns use Facebook like my grandmother uses an iPad as a tea coaster.”

He said the bare minimum data Facebook needed for political ad targeting was to simply find a cluster of Fan Pages that conformed to the candidate and to use Facebook’s Look-A-Like Ad solution to find more.

“Look-a-like is an advertising function that allows you to create a group of seed users, i.e. Fans you know who love your articles. Then you tell Facebook, ‘okay, find more people who are like this group of Fan I have indicated’ and you can then advertise to those people who might like your stuff, but you don’t know who they are.”

Facebook also has functions and vendors that allow for automatic testing of advertisements.

“We measure the changes in each ad's performance and advise our clients based on ad performance relative to campaign objective,” Do said.

Do said AutoPolitic, which focuses on “election management” and not content creation, charged clients US\$2,000 a month. His firm’s AI programme⁹⁸ tracks a candidate’s influence on social media, identifies opinion leaders on the candidate’s campaign issues, checks the influence of various messages, and looks at how an audience perceives the messages.

He has claimed that a “handful” of candidates who consulted AutoPolitic in the 2016 Sarawak state election had all won their campaigns.

⁹⁸ ⁹⁸ Boo, S.L. (2017 April). How Malaysian politicians use big data to profile you. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/how-malaysian-politicians-use-big-data-to-profile-you>

Invoke



Video 6: Invoke video showing its INV8 online news channel broadcast at 8pm. That particular episode is on the Anti-Fake News Act and a planned Bersih protest against the redelineation of electoral boundaries, among other news items. Retrieved from Invoke's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/invoquemalaysia/videos/824190201103991/>

Invoke, a pro-Opposition data analytics outfit, released a report in March 2018 on its predictions⁹⁹ for the 14th general election, claiming that Pakatan Harapan would retain Selangor and Penang and win three additional states – Kedah, Perak and Johor. It also claimed Negri Sembilan and Malacca would get hung assemblies, while BN would retake Kelantan from PAS that has governed the east coast state for almost 30 years. Invoke further claimed PAS would not win a single parliament seat. Invoke also has an online news show broadcast at 8pm Mondays to Fridays (see Video 6).

Invoke said voters were profiled through traditional phone polling, phone banking and canvassing, digital tracking over social media, and digital polling over Facebook. Data was analysed through “logistic regression”, which is an elementary statistical method used to predict binary outcomes. Microsoft Azure was used to run the analysis on voters' likelihood of voting for a particular party.

The data outfit said since December 2016, it has dialed more than 17 million numbers and successfully recorded voting responses from more than 200,000 voters. It is unknown where Invoke got these phone numbers from. Digital polling and social media tracking added over 300,000 more data points, it said. Invoke said its surveys usually had a 95 per cent confidence level and a margin error of between 1.5 per cent and 4 per cent.

⁹⁹ Hong, B. (2018 March). Pakatan to bag 5 states in GE14, says Invoke. Retrieved from <https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/42094/>



Figure 16: Rafizi Ramli is the founder of Invoke, a pro-Opposition data analytics firm. Retrieved from Invoke Malaysia's Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/invokemalaysia/>

Invoke founder Rafizi Ramli (see Figure 16) previously said in April 2017 that Invoke gathered “millions of data”¹⁰⁰ on voters from basic information like age, residential post code, gender, race and religion, to their political inclination, whether their votes were transferable between Opposition parties, as well as their position on issues like Shariah law.

Invoke said in its March 2018 report that its voter surveys included topics like the 14th general election, a proposed Shariah Bill in Parliament by PAS president Abdul Hadi Awang, the prime minister’s popularity and Opposition’s candidate for prime minister, vote transferability, voter sentiments and main issues, national opinion poll, sentiments on the economy, as well as polls in various constituencies.

Invoke, which was started by PKR vice president Rafizi in August 2016, said previously it is working with 50 candidates¹⁰¹ in the 14th general election, most of whom are from PKR.

Rafizi has said Invoke’s task is to identify swing voters with a 40 to 60 per cent probability of voting for a particular party so that the party can focus campaigning on this group of voters, rather than to expend resources on hardcore pro-Opposition voters or solid BN supporters.

¹⁰⁰ Boo, S.L. (2017 April). Armed with big data, Opposition gears up for GE14 fight against BN. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/armed-with-big-data-opposition-gears-up-for-ge14-fight-against-bn>

¹⁰¹ Boo, S.L. (2017 April). How Malaysian politicians use big data to profile you. Retrieved from <http://www.themalaymailonline.com/malaysia/article/how-malaysian-politicians-use-big-data-to-profile-you>

“You should never preach or campaign to converted people,” Rafizi told *Malay Mail Online* in April 2017.

“We should only campaign to persuadable swing voters, and in our case, Opposition, we need to work on those voters who were either genetically Umno but now feel like they hate Umno for whatever reasons, or those voter groups or clusters whom by profile have grouses with Umno.”

Rafizi also said then that personalised political messages for voters may not be necessary, stressing that Invoke’s work was focused on profiling “marginal” and “persuadable” voters.

He claimed issues like the goods and services tax (GST), salary levels, and the migrant influx could be common issues across all the 50 constituencies Invoke is working in. Big data analytics also enabled candidates to identify issues that had traction in their constituency.

“If you give some solutions to this and you convince them, it already covers 90 per cent and it may be able to convert 90 per cent. Then I don’t have to go into the details of talking about what Alor Setar residents want,” Rafizi was quoted saying.

Rafizi also previously said Facebook was the most effective way to reach out even to rural voters, as party members were usually the ones attending campaign rallies, also known as “ceramah”, most of the time. He said Malaysians spent about four hours a day on social media.

“What we need to get through are people who will not leave the comfort of their bedroom or living room, or people who want to know more but couldn’t be bothered,” said Rafizi. “There’s only one way to get through them – it’s through Facebook.”

Mysterious phone surveys

Two Malaysians have reported getting phone calls from parties claiming to come from an outsourced contact centre service provider and from the “Pusat Banci Negara” (“National Census Department”), who asked questions about their voting preferences. There is no such National Census Department; national censuses are run by the Department of Statistics Malaysia.

Norman Goh, a journalist, told the writer that he received a call on March 20 2018 from a woman introducing herself from “Pusat Banci Negara”, who spelled out his name in full and spoke in Bahasa Malaysia.

The woman asked him several questions in Bahasa Malaysia, which were: “Do you think the current government is good or not? Do you know Stampin MP YB Julian Tan Kok Ping? Do you think he’s good or not? Do you think the Opposition is better as the government, yes or no?”

Tan is from the DAP.

Goh said the caller hung up before he could ask her where she obtained his phone number.

A young Chinese woman said she received a phone call on March 12 2018 from UTS, who asked her about her voting preferences, polling station, and reason for voting. UTS' website¹⁰² describes it as one of Malaysia's "leading outsourced contact centre service providers".

"I didn't give them a chance to ask further because I declined to answer," she told the writer.

It is unknown which political parties have commissioned these phone surveys.

A note to Readers:

Between the time Boo completed this piece in March 2018 and its publication in June 2018, a number of political developments in Malaysia transpired. A brief summary of these events follow.

- May 9: 14th general election which sees Pakatan Harapan (PH) win federal power and Barisan Nasional (BN) ousted from government for the first time since Malaysia's independence.
- May 10: Mahathir Mohamad sworn in as Malaysia's seventh prime minister.
- May 11 - 12: PH forms the Kedah and Perak state governments, respectively, after two BN assemblymen defect to join PH. An alliance between the Sabah Heritage Party and PH creates the Sabah state government after six BN representatives defect. Among the constituent political groups comprising BN, The United Sabah Party becomes the fourth Sabahan party to leave BN, after the exit of Upko, the Liberal Democratic Party, and Parti Bersatu Rakyat Sabah.
- May 19: The People's Progressive Party President M. Kayveas announces that the party has left BN, though the announcement is disputed by other party leaders.
- May 30: Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad announces that payments under the 1Malaysia People's Aid (BR1M) will continue, but the scheme will be renamed "Cost of Living Aid".
- June 12: Sarawakian parties Parti Pesaka Bumiputera Bersatu, Parti Rakyat Sarawak, Progressive Democratic Party, and Sarawak United People's Party leave BN. They form a new coalition, Gabungan Parti Sarawak.
- June 23: Gerakan leaves BN, leaving the coalition which once had 13 component parties with the three original parties of BN's post-Independence predecessor, the Alliance – Umno, MCA and MIC.
- June 24: In the Umno election, outgoing Umno Youth vice chief Khairul Azwan Harun fails to win the race for the Youth chief post that was won by Asyraf Wajdi Dusuki. Shahril Hamdan is elected Youth vice-chief.

¹⁰² UTS. Retrieved from <https://unitedteleservice.com/about-us/>