

Young voters emerge as kingmakers in Negeri Sembilan, analysts urge parties to listen

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The Election Commission (EC) has set July 28 for early voting in the Negeri Sembilan state election, while polling will take place on Aug 1. - Photo by Bernama

SHAH ALAM - Negeri Sembilan state election is shaping up not only as a contest between political parties, but also as a clear indication that young voters are becoming increasingly influential in determining the direction of the state government.

With 213,772 voters aged below 30 out of a total of 889,490 registered voters, youths are no longer merely a statistical group but have the potential to become decisive factors in many constituencies.

Unlike previous generations, who were often associated with loyalty to certain parties, younger voters are now more inclined to assess which party can offer solutions to their everyday problems.

More significantly, many young people in Negeri Sembilan are evaluating parties based on their ability to address three issues closest to their daily lives, quality job opportunities, affordable housing and the cost of living.

These issues are closely linked to the realities faced by the younger generation, as many graduates are still struggling to secure jobs that match their qualifications, own a home and cope with rising living expenses.

Young voter Nor Shafiqah Mohd Ghazali, 25, said the government chosen should ensure that assistance and initiatives are channelled to those who truly qualify, regardless of background.

She said the government must also fulfil its promise to create more employment opportunities, as Negeri Sembilan is expanding through developments such as the Malaysia Vision Valley (MVV) project.

"In addition, the issue of affordable home ownership for young people, especially those in the B40 group, must be given attention because it is one of the main challenges faced today," she said.



Most young voters in Negeri Sembilan assess political parties based on their ability to address the three issues that matter most in their daily lives. Inset, from left: Nor Shafiqah Mohd Ghazali, M Mugilan, Megat Muhammad Faris and Tang Rui Cong.

Another young voter, Tang Rui Cong, 24, said priority should be given to expanding employment opportunities for youths and university students, strengthening support for young entrepreneurs and providing more affordable homes.

He said a job-matching platform should be introduced to help university students obtain temporary work during semester breaks, alongside continued support for young people venturing into business.

"The application process for affordable housing should be simplified so that more young people have the opportunity to own their own homes," he said.

Another voter, Megat Muhammad Faris, 35, said the government should focus on creating quality jobs in Bagan Pinang rather than relying solely on the tourism sector.

He said that while tourism-related sectors such as hotels and the food and beverage industry are important to the local economy, they are insufficient to meet the aspirations of youths with technical qualifications, diplomas and degrees.

"The government needs to attract more investment in high-technology industries, automation, modern logistics, green energy and the digital economy to create better-paying jobs.

"This would also help reduce the migration of young people to major cities in search of employment," he said.

Voter M Mugilan, 33, expressed hope that greater attention would be given to strengthening the economy, addressing the cost of living and providing more career opportunities for youths.

He said youth development should be enhanced through education, skills training and entrepreneurship opportunities so that young people can compete effectively in the job

More rational voters



Mashitah (left) and Syahrudin

The views expressed by these young voters are consistent with the opinion of Universiti Utara Malaysia Malaysian Institute of Political Studies director Associate Professor Dr Mashitah Mohd Udin, who believes that young voters are now more rational in making political choices.

She said they no longer support parties based on sentiment or traditional loyalty, but instead evaluate authenticity, credibility and a party's ability to offer solutions to issues that directly affect their lives.

According to her, young voters want approaches that genuinely address their daily needs, particularly in relation to quality employment opportunities, the cost of living and first-home ownership.

"In this state election, young voters are no longer merely supplementary to the total number of voters, but have the potential to become kingmakers in many mixed and Malay-majority seats.

"Parties that can understand their aspirations through practical policies, effective communication and credible leadership will have an advantage in influencing the election outcome.

"In this context, the behaviour of young voters is in line with Rational Choice Theory, where voters tend to make decisions based on the benefits they expect to gain rather than purely on sentiment or loyalty to a party," she said.

More responsive to practical policies

A similar view was shared by Universiti Malaysia Sabah political analyst Associate Professor Dr Syahrudin Awang Ahmad, who said young voters are more responsive to policy offers that provide solutions to economic and survival issues.

"In my view, today's young people are more responsive to policy narratives focused on solving cost-of-living problems, creating quality jobs and providing industrial training allowances than to traditional political rhetoric.

"This is because they are the group currently struggling with economic realities and the challenge of sustaining a decent life, whether as single individuals, young families or newly married couples," he said.

He said contesting parties should seize the opportunity by presenting practical manifesto offers that suit current realities, such as strengthening the gig economy, expanding affordable housing and introducing high-technology skills programmes.

According to him, relying solely on current sentiment is insufficient to attract young voters, and it must be accompanied by campaigns that are closer and more relevant to the younger generation.