Malaysia’s Upcoming State Elections: A Test of Confidence in Anwar’s Government

On 12 August 2023, six states in Malaysia will conduct their respective state elections, including Penang, Kedah, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Terengganu, and Kelantan. These state polls will be the first major elections since the 15th General Election in November 2022, when Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim secured a parliamentary majority by forming a Unity Government comprising several coalitions led by Pakatan Harapan and Barisan Nasional. Anwar's coalition is currently in power in three of the six states involved, including in Selangor which has the greatest number of seats being contested and is Malaysia’s economically wealthiest and most populous state.

While the results of the August 2023 state elections will not directly impact the status of the prime minister and governing parties in the federal administration, it is largely seen as a first referendum that will test the cohesion of and gauge the support for the Unity Government since it came into power during the last General Elections. The Elections Commission states that a total of 9.7 million individuals are eligible to vote in the upcoming state polls.

*Source:*

[*https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/st-explains-all-you-need-to-know-about-the-malaysia-state-elections*](https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/st-explains-all-you-need-to-know-about-the-malaysia-state-elections)

**What this means for the UK sector**

Education

The state elections are not expected to bring a change to Malaysia’s education policies or to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education as education remains under the purview of the federal government. But a sweep in votes towards the opposition could be a sign that confidence in the current administration is waning and point towards increasing political instability over the medium term leading up to the next general elections. It could also make it more challenging for the current unity government to push through with economic reforms where those come into conflict with the state government.

For the UK education sector, the biggest risk to watch out for is the outcome of the elections in the state of Selangor. A change in Selangor’s state government could potentially lead to large financial flows out of the country as well as affect future foreign investment decisions. The ringgit, already one of the worst-performing currencies in Southeast Asia in the first half of 2023, could depreciate further, thereby affecting student decisions to study abroad. At the same time, a more Islamic-centric coalition, if it comes into power in Selangor, could push up enrolment in private and international schooling as well as demand for transnational education as opposed to public higher

education.

Travelling to Malaysia

Heightened security is likely in the affected states during the days leading up to and on voting day which falls on 12 August 2023.  Visitors would be advised to expect transport disruptions and allow for additional time to reach destinations.  Do check for updated information on road closures, election-related disruptions or changes in event timings from local sources.