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"UUM : UNIVERSITI PENGURUSAN TERKEMUKA"
(THE EMINENT MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY)

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CHALLENGES FACED BY YOUNG VOTERS IN DECIDING THE FUTURE LEADERS OF THE NATION



UUM ONLINE: After the 2019 Constitution (Amendment) Bill, which included lowering the voting age to 18 by majority, young voters are now entrusted with the responsibility of deciding the future leaders of their choice.

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof Dato' Dr Ahmad Bashawir Abdul Ghani said the challenges for young people when Undi18 was passed, was to make sure they made the right decision in the upcoming general election.

He said it was a big challenge because the decision they made would determine their future.

"We want to select candidates who can develop the country. Sometimes we make emotional decisions, but what matters is what it takes as a leader to further advance this beloved country.

"Do not choose political candidates who appeal to oneself, on the contrary the candidates should possess qualities of leadership to develop the country in the future," he said at the #Undi18 Discourse Session held at the Mu'adzam Shah Hall recently. The event discussed issues related to the lowering of the voting age to 18 compared to the previous age – 21.

He further reiterated that the discourse was aimed at giving the students the much needed exposure as once the students are enrolled as university students their thinking ought to be matured and of higher level. Hence, voting at the age of 18, would not be a big issue.

He also called on the younger generation particularly those in UUM to play important role in the development of the country and succeed in becoming leaders in their respective fields.

The discourse session which was moderated by Mr Muhammad Izzat Siraj Mohd Iyas Zainal, President of the UUM Student Representative Council also featured three panellists namely the Kedah State Deputy Election Director, Mr Mohd Faishol Abu Bakar; UUM Legal Advisor, Assoc. Prof Dr Zainal Amin Ayub and fellow UUM Debater, Mr Mohd Farid Mohd Azmi.

Meanwhile, Mr Mohd Faishol said Undi18 meant that 18-year-olds could automatically register as voters and become candidates in the next election.

According to him, if the next general elections take place in 2023, the number of voters will increase to 22.2 million (approximately) 34.8 percent will comprise youths between the ages of 18 and 29.

He said the existence of the Electoral Academy in 2007 was to educate, enhance knowledge and raise awareness on the importance of involvement, not only from the personnel of the Election Commission (EC) but also from the public in the election process.

"In Kedah, to date, the EC has conducted over 30 programmes involving institutions of higher education and schools. So far, such efforts have reached a total of 20,000 participants in its bid to raise awareness of the electoral system in Malaysia.

"We will continue to provide insights into the electoral process or system but in terms of challenges, the EC will continue to convince the young people to do their bid as voters," he said.

He added that it would be a challenge for the EC to ensure that the number of votes who cast their votes would tally with the total number of voters in the automatically registered electoral rolls.

Meanwhile according to Dr. Zainal Amin, no law in Malaysia compelled or forced its people to vote except in some other countries.

According to him, although no such law existed, early education should be introduced to the target group.

He said UUM had taken proactive steps with the organisation of the discourse. As it was aimed at inculcating awareness amongst students regarding Undi18 and their responsibility to vote.

"Undi18 has brought about impact to the young people as voters," said UUM Debater, Mr Mohd Farid.

According to him, he was of the opinion that Undi18 afforded the young people with the opportunity to shape the nation, however this group of people must be made to understand first-hand what politics, democracy and elections entail. Most youths equated politics as mere political parties and not a system.

The Undi18 Discourse aims to provide UUM students with the knowledge and understanding of issues related to voting at the age of 18. In the upcoming elections 18 year-olds will be allowed to vote and become political candidates.

The Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2019 was tabled in the House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat) for the first reading on 16 July and was later passed on 25 July with two-thirds majority.

Many countries in the world have lowered their voting age to 18, including Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Australia, New Zealand, Bangladesh and Hong Kong.



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