

ANNUAL
REPORT
2021

REFSA
Research For Social
Advancement



BUILD BACK BETTER: MALAYSIA'S ROAD TO RECOVERY

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year 2022!

Two years after the Covid-19 pandemic was first reported, despite the occasional challenges of new variants, many observers seem to think that the worst of the pandemic is behind us. I hope they are right.

The world after the pandemic is not the same as before. The prolonged crisis has forced us to rethink and rebuild.

The rebuilding process will need a new understanding of what went wrong and new ideas about how to fix things. Here is why think tanks like [Research for Social Advancement \(REFSA\)](#) are so relevant.

I would like to convey my deepest appreciation to REFSA colleagues who have stayed with us throughout this hard time and continue to contribute to the national conversation of what the best way forward is for Malaysia.

From the bottom of my heart, I would also like to thank all our donors who helped us survive the many difficult months in 2021. It is not easy to sustain a team of policy researchers when even most politicians ignore focus on policies and their consequences on the men and women in the streets.

The world faces at least five massive challenges: health crisis, inequality, democracy in decline, geopolitical rivalries, and climate change.

Health Crisis

The Covid-19 pandemic has laid bare the weaknesses of health systems throughout the world, even hospitals and facilities in developed nations failed miserably. Yet, at the same time, the speedy development of vaccines showed the great potential and promises of medical science.

If there is one single most important lesson from the pandemic, it is that the world lives in a connected manner and only if the most vulnerable is taken care of, that we will have a safe world.

Failure to ensure vaccine equity for the poorer nations and vulnerable communities in our midst – such as refugees and prisoners – means that we will continue to face new variants or new infections.

Inequality

Inequality is a serious threat to the coherence of societies and to democracies. The inequality we see today is very much the outcome of the neoliberal economic ideas over a period of the last half-a-century.

The idea that corporations should solely focus on maximising profits is now coming to an end. I am glad that friends from the corporate world are now talking about ESG (environment, sustainability, and governance) or stakeholder capitalism.

We need to recognise that corporations are part of the society, and making profits is not an end to itself. Profits are to be made from solving societal problems and

consumers' needs. Corporations need to keep in mind that they are responsible to shareholders, consumers, workers, and the environment.

The maximising profit mantra of neoliberalism has a corrosive effect on political systems throughout the world, as evidenced by the huge business lobbying works in the United States. Everything is for sale, including the integrity of politicians and the long-term interests of the public.

Over the past 50 years, workers have lost out in terms of jobs and pay, hence inequality perpetuates in the United States and throughout the world. When inequality persists, autocrats and authoritarians rise to power by tapping on the sentiments of the unhappy underclass, as shown by Donald Trump's rise.

Democracy in decline

Democracy throughout the world is under threat. To deal with the decline and backsliding of democracy, one must deal with inequality and find a new balance between capital and workers, and between capital and the environment. ESG must be understood in such a context.

Geopolitical rivalries

Geopolitical rivalries have worsened in 2021 and I would say that for the years to come, whatever we do, we must factor into geopolitical situations. The age of innocence – between the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and pre-Covid era, has ended.

Geopolitical rivalries will colour foreign investments into Malaysia. So long as there is no hot war between the United States and China, Malaysia stands to benefit from corporations from both the United States and China that move out from China or are looking for a "China+1" production site.

Managing supply chains in the pandemic and in the context of geopolitical rivalries is another challenge. My point is Malaysia needs to be concerned with geopolitics and seek an active role in shaping directions, agendas and events for the region we are in.

Climate change

The massive floods in Selangor and Kuala Lumpur, arguably the worst in the capital since the 1971 floods, is a reminder that climate change is not a joke nor fiction. It's real and, like the pandemic, climate change affects the world across national boundaries.

Malaysia needs to be an active participant in shaping the world's climate agenda and to rebuild Malaysian society with climate challenges in mind.

2022 is unlikely to be easier than the past year. But I am hopeful that as the challenges the world will face in the 2020s are clearer to us, the clarity can help us to focus on efforts to make Malaysia and the world a better place.

We hope you will continue to support REFSA so that we could help steer the nation towards a better direction.



Liew Chin Tong
January 2022

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

On the road to recovery

Many will look back at 2021 and wonder what we have achieved in the past year as a nation. Without a doubt, it was a year full of monumental events with long-lasting repercussions.

For almost two years now, Malaysia has continued to grapple with political uncertainty and a pandemic that has metastasised into an unprecedented socio-economic crisis. It still threatens to undo years of economic growth, human development and employment prospects for the people.

For one, our GDP forecast for the year was twice revised downwards by the World Bank. In addition, various misdirected policy decisions further impeded private businesses from recovering. More worryingly, we are faced with rising inequality and a looming crisis in our social safety net, with only 3% of Malaysians able to afford to retire.

With the country's short and long-term recovery both under threat, the pandemic has laid bare the current economic and social divide in Malaysia. It is clear that the economic and socio-economic models we have adopted over the last few decades are falling short of tackling the "polycrisis" of our times. As policymakers and economists around the world continue to debate, chart and rethink the most appropriate framework that drives sustainable economic growth and social cohesion, so must we.

We can and must act now to map out an **economic future for Malaysia based on inclusive, sustainable economic growth and development**. The changing employment landscape, the imminent threat of COVID variants, the rising geopolitical tension in the region, the shifting patterns of international trade amid the growing competitiveness of our ASEAN neighbours and - last but not least - the repercussions brought about by climate change must inform all decisions and policies we make.

It is under these uncertain times that REFSA continues to formulate, narrate and advocate for progressive policy discourse. This year, we have been on the pulse of the nation's pandemic management and have provided real-time responses to current affairs in the nation - from stimulus measure analysis and Budget commentaries to insights on Parliamentary debates.

At the same time, we have remained proactive by always keeping the bigger picture in mind. In 2021, we continued to bring across new politically and economically relevant ideas through longer-term policy frameworks, such as our [wish list for the 12th Malaysia Plan](#).

We highlighted long standing structural shortcomings in our socio-economic fabric that we must urgently address, and challenged old dogmas that hold us back. From trace-testing to protecting jobs to reshaping our social protection system, we never stopped advocating for a more

equitable economy, a more economically secure workforce, and a stronger and more supportive community.

Our body of work speaks for itself. We published 60 pieces of writing, launched two books online, organised webinars and produced various stories, podcasts and videos to widen our engagement with the public. We shared our analysis on media channels and participated in many events and closed-door discussions along with other experts. I must express my deepest appreciation to the entire team. Despite the continuous disruption brought about by the various movement control orders, we were able to work seamlessly as a team and never wavered from our conviction of contributing to better policies for a more just, equitable and resilient society.

In 2022, we will continue to be a **proactive agent of change**, and build on our research strength and network experiences to shape public policy discussions. As challenging as 2021 has been, we must not lose sight of things to be hopeful about in 2022 and beyond: the road to recovery and reform is long but within reach.

I must emphasise that it would not be possible for us to sustain our operations without all our partners and supporters. Despite the tough circumstances that we all faced, each and every one of you has given us your confidence and supported our work. This has been instrumental for us to continue our mission to promote greater understanding of social justice and serve as a research and analysis body.

I hope you enjoy reading this report. If you find our work insightful and impactful, we humbly appeal for your continued

generosity, solidarity and support to help us accomplish more as we continue to ignite change through rigorous research and meaningful engagements. Together, let's build a better Malaysia.



Tan E Hun

January 2022

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REFSA IN 2021

2021 continued to be a challenging and turbulent year for many. Throughout the year, we have witnessed a lack of political leadership and impactful policy directions to kickstart our recovery process and build back better. It was an intense start in January, with the sudden announcement of the state of emergency, followed by more movement control orders which continue to impede economic recovery. SOP u-turns and indecisive measures occurred frequently while the lack of an open data ecosystem reduced our ability to fully utilise public sector data for the benefit of society.

The arrival of the vaccine in February was a welcome event. However, we also saw an explosion in the rate of hospitalisations and deaths due to the Delta variant, which paralysed the healthcare system from July to September. Hence, it is clear that we are not out of the woods yet, given the presence of new COVID-19 variants and the slow booster jab uptake.

It is under these circumstances that REFSA continues to provide thought leadership and participate actively in conducting research, disseminating ideas and shaping policy directions on important economic and socio-economic issues of the nation.

COVID-19 and Economic Recovery

This year saw many opportunities for reset and recalibration, particularly through the tabling of the 12th Malaysia Plan and Budget 2022. Although some of the measures announced were encouraging and well-intentioned, the road to comprehensive structural reform remains distant. These

events did not adequately set the stage for long-term planning, meaning we have missed a golden opportunity to lay down the necessary foundations to rebuild better.

Further, the government's largely reactive and myopic response to the pandemic dampened any significant progress that could have been made to revive the economy, sustain businesses and livelihoods.

As we continue to build on our accumulated knowledge and experience, we commit to addressing the systemic shortfalls of the nation's economic and socio-economic agenda. We want to focus on **creating a new paradigm for building back better by producing data-driven research and actionable policy recommendations.** Our policy and engagement areas are varied, and cover institutional reforms, good governance, economic policies, social protection policies, urban infrastructure, and sustainability to name a few.

REFSA IN 2021

Overall, our work is informed by the four key themes below:

1



**COVID-19
pandemic
management**

2



**Economic
recovery and
resilience**

3



**Job growth and
comprehensive
social protection**

4



**Institutional
reform**

To do this, we work on:



Research analysis and strategy papers aimed at unpacking and understanding complex policy issues.



Media engagement and commentaries to disseminate key policy ideas and information.



Organise seminars and conferences with stakeholders, lawmakers, government agencies, community leaders, and the public at large to facilitate productive dialogues and discussions.



Create digital media output such as infographics, video primers, and podcasts to reach a broader audience in an informative and engaging manner.

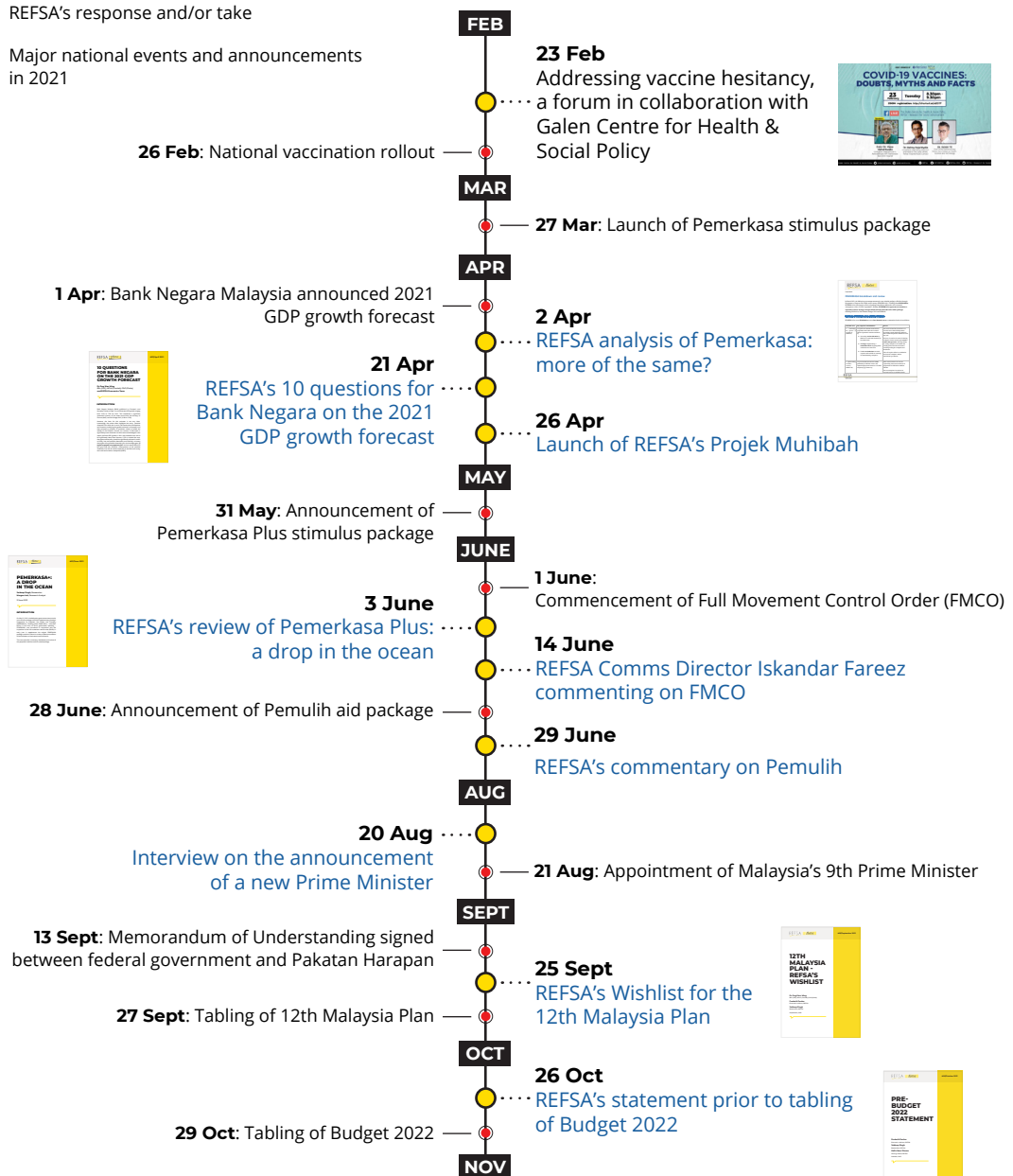
Our purpose has always been to serve the public by formulating policy recommendations that prioritise the needs of the people and advancement of the society. As **one of the very few trilingual think tanks in the nation**, we continue our work and media engagements in all three of Malaysia's primary languages – Malay, English and Mandarin.

2021 TIMELINE

2021 was a year of major events and milestones for Malaysia. We were highly responsive to these events and produced salient research and policy work in conjunction with the ebb and flow of Malaysia's political and socio-economic challenges. Here's a brief timeline of Malaysia's key events and our corresponding output.

● REFSA's response and/or take

● Major national events and announcements in 2021



2021 – AT A GLANCE



REFSA continues to provide thought leadership in key topics and events on Malaysian politics and policy. In the last 12 months, we have brought **serious, original research** to the task of analysing policy problems and proposing solutions through 60 policy briefs, research papers, and opinion pieces cumulatively.



REFSA stays at the forefront of **policy dialogues and debates**, with more than 100 press statements released, interviews and citations in media.



As part of our advocacy effort, we continue to explore **engaging ways and innovative formats** to educate and share policy ideas with the public through digital media, producing 15 infographics and 6 multimedia outputs over the year.



We participate in the effort to create greater public knowledge and understanding of the social and economic system. In 2021, we conducted 5 webinars to **propel conversations** with leading experts about policy issues in Malaysia.



We joined various **closed-door discussions** with key stakeholders, lawmakers, community leaders, government and its agencies to facilitate discussions, share insights and drive better policy-making process.



Our **social media channels** have also grown, reaching 1.5 million audience impressions on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram

2021 HIGHLIGHTS

COVID-19 Pandemic Management



How can the nation tackle the immediate challenges we face right here, right now? Launched in April 2021, **Projek Muhibah** was conceived to specifically address various socio-economic challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in Malaysia. It puts the spotlight on rapidly evolving challenges Malaysia faces in the wake of the pandemic and its aftermath. The project is a compilation of research analyses, insights, policy recommendations, and real-life stories aimed to create public awareness and discourse on the impact of effective policy-making at the time of the pandemic.

We focused on analysing the effectiveness of policies and SOPs, and highlighted concrete ways to control the pandemic. We advocated for clear, dynamic and relevant measures on how to reopen the economy, proposed a comprehensive strategy to raise fiscal spending, and shared our research on what are the most impactful immediate economic assistance to those hit hardest by the pandemic.

We also ran a “Stories from the Ground” project to articulate the extent of damage the pandemic has wreaked upon us by spotlighting personal stories of those who have been directly impacted. We further co-organised webinars to provide a platform to tackle doubts from the public regarding the vaccine and vaccination process.

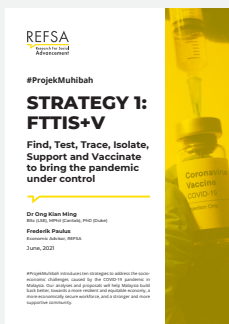
What we did

- 9 policy briefs and opinion pieces, 5 press statements, 9 “Stories from the Ground” essays, 8 infographics and 3 webinars.
- Cited in various media sources, appeared in interviews and participated in open and closed-door engagements.

Impact

- Provided a forward-thinking framework with solutions on how the government should **respond to the COVID-19 crisis**.
- **Spotlighted the real life struggles** of those whose livelihoods were and still are deeply impacted by the pandemic.
- Our research and recommendations helped **build a knowledge-base** which guided and informed the nation’s response to the pandemic.
- Our insights and analyses were **widely disseminated and discussed** in the public policy sphere.

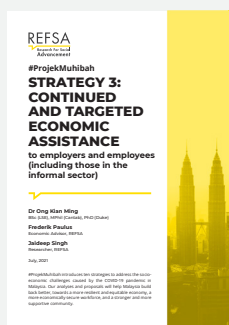
Our Work



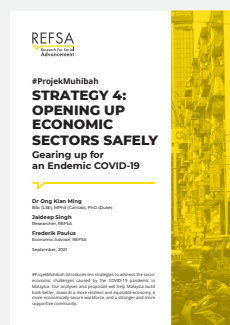
A framework for pandemic management, 18 Jun 2021



Highlighting importance of science and data in pandemic management, 2 Jul 2021



A critical analysis on the importance of economic assistance, 12 Jul 2021



A framework to opening up the economy safely, 16 Sept 2021



A guide for businesses to reopen safely, 14 Jul 2021

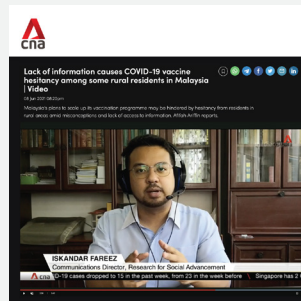


Real life stories in a post pandemic society, May - Jul 2021

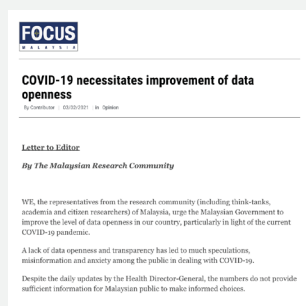
In the News



REFSA Executive Director Tan E Hun spoke in an Oriental Daily webinar on MCO 2.0's economic impact, 14 Jan 2021



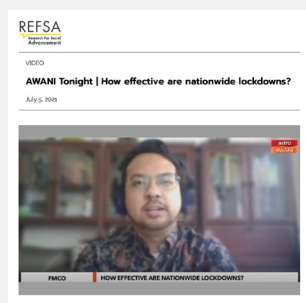
REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez interviewed by Channel News Asia on vaccine hesitancy, 4 Jun 2021



Spearheaded collective advocacy with the Malaysian research community on data openness, 3 Feb 2021



REFSA Research Coordinator Fakhurrazi Rashid interviewed by Sinar Harian on COVID-19 SOPs, 17 May 2021



REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez interviewed by Astro Awani on the effectiveness of nationwide lockdowns, 5 Jul 2021



REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez interviewed by the Malay Mail on youth involvement in activism, 9 Sep 2021

Economic Recovery and Resilience



A big part of our work in this cluster focuses on highlighting key priorities that will help steer the nation towards resilient economic growth.

From a short term perspective, we critically examined the stimulus packages announced this year, and provided critical analysis of the 2021 GDP forecast. We gave key insights and analysis into the yearly Budget announcement, which was widely published and discussed. Underpinning these are the twin goals of maintaining an expansionary budget while implementing productive measures to control expenditure and growing the nation's revenue.

Our work goes beyond proposing immediate policy actions to overcome the repercussions of the economic crisis. The announcement of the 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP) in October is significant. In addition to setting out guidelines on repairing the economic damage wreaked by the pandemic, the 12MP has the potential to map an economic future for Malaysia based on **healthy economic growth that is inclusive and sustainable**.

In our briefs, we stressed the importance of **moving away from "short-termism" and prioritising longer-term plans** to effectively drive the future direction of national economic growth for us to build back better. We confront and tackle complex and multi-faceted policy directives, from addressing the issue of foreign labour, to the importance of seeking new sources of government revenue.

We led discussions on the state's role in driving innovation, and how governments

can be a catalyst to propel a resilient and future looking economy, including how to reorient the role of GLCs/GLICs and turn them into key vehicles to **drive economic and social impact**. Building on our work in 2020, we explored the role of the state through a mission-oriented industrial approach and created a microsite detailing Mariana Mazzucato's "Mission Economy".

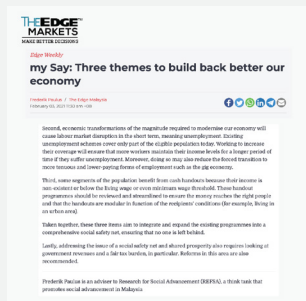
What we did

- 15 policy briefs and opinion pieces, 6 press statements, 5 infographics, 2 podcasts and production of numerous videos.
- Live-tweet analysis during the Budget 2022 speech by the Minister of Finance
- Cited in various media and interviews, including speaking on four primetime news channels (in 3 different languages) on the day Budget 2022 was announced.

Impact

- Amplified strategies of **long-term economic planning** for the nation's post-pandemic recovery.
- Led discussions for a **mission-oriented industrial approach** that triggers higher and cleaner growth and that centres on 'patient-financing' for a sustainable future
- Our insights and analyses were shared widely and informed discussions on the nation's **stimulus packages**.
- Made real-time discussions on **Budget 2022** more accessible, our analysis of the economic and social repercussions it created was widely reported.

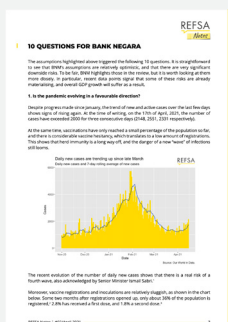
Our Work



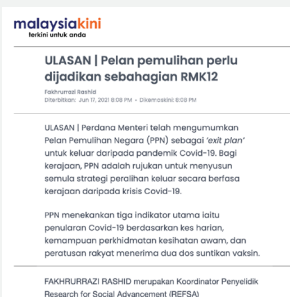
Article written by
REFSA Economic Advisor Frederik Paulus,
3 Feb 2021



Mission oriented strategies
fact sheet,
17 Mar 2021



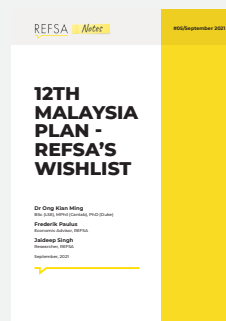
10 Questions for Bank Negara Malaysia
on the 2021 GDP growth forecast,
21 Apr 2021



Article written by REFSA Researcher
Fakhruddin Rashid on the 12th Malaysia Plan,
17 Jun 2021

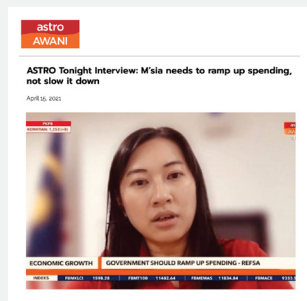


REFSA Executive Director Tan E Hun spoke
on a post COVID economic policy forum,
24 Jul 2021



REFSA's wishlist for
the 12th Malaysia Plan,
25 Sep 2021

In the News



REFSA Executive Director Tan E Hun interviewed by Astro Awani on government spending, 15 Apr 2021



REFSA's view on Malaysia's growth forecast, 21 Apr 2021



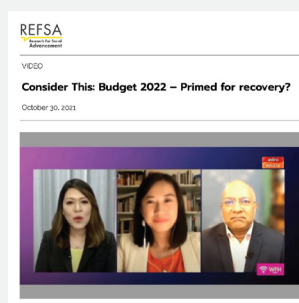
Coverage of REFSA's position on the Pemerksa Plus stimulus measures, 4 Jun 2021



REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez interviewed by Bernama on Budget 2022, 29 Oct 2021



REFSA Executive Director Tan E Hun interviewed by 8TV on Budget 2022, 29 Oct 2021



REFSA Executive Director Tan E Hun interviewed by Astro Awani on Budget 2022, 29 Oct 2021

Job Growth and Comprehensive Social Protection



The response to the pandemic this year has inflicted significant economic scarring and impacted livelihoods in the form of business closures, job losses and reduced incomes for many. It has also exposed longstanding structural shortcomings in our socio-economic fabric.

In this cluster, we focus on enhancing our **social security system**, our **housing policies** and how we can transform people's lives through availability of **good jobs**.

We advocated for the need to address issues of low growth and low productivity with an aim to improve wages and the nation's social safety net. We shared how the state can play a role in addressing obstacles faced by our youth in the job market, and highlighted the challenges faced by women in returning to the workforce post pandemic.

We wrote and spoke about the growing inequality in housing, and held discussions exploring the way we organise and design our urban areas and living spaces, using this current predicament as an impetus to disrupt the norm and reimagine a new urban model that would build resilience for our cities.

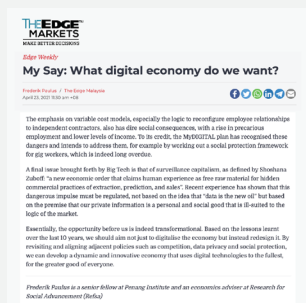
What we did

- 6 policy briefs and opinion pieces, 2 press statements, 2 infographics, 1 podcast and 1 webinar.
- Cited in various media sources, appeared in interviews and participated in open and closed-door engagements.

Impact

- Advocated for the importance of **social equality, decentralisation and digitalisation** as the core tenets of Malaysia's socio-economic recovery and resilience
- Steered the national conversation to **prioritise jobs** and revive the economy through holistic stimulus packages and economic reforms
- Emphasised the importance of a **robust social safety net**

Our Work



Article written by REFSA Economic Advisor
Frederik Paulus on digital economy,
23 Apr 2021



Article written by REFSA Research Analyst
Morgan Loh on women's labour force
participation, 26 Jul 2021



Article written by REFSA Researcher
Lilly Wee on affordable housing,
16 Aug 2021



REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez
spoke about gig workers' rights in a forum,
28 Aug 2021

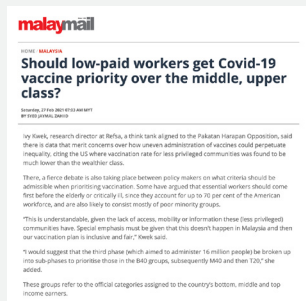


Article on socio-economic inequality by
Jaideep Singh, published in PRAKSIS,
The Journal of Asian Social Democracy,
17 Nov 2021

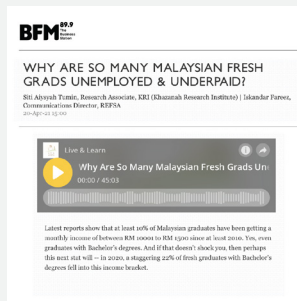


Article on inequality by Iskandar Fareez and
Morgan Loh, published in PRAKSIS,
The Journal of Asian Social Democracy,
17 Nov 2021

In the News



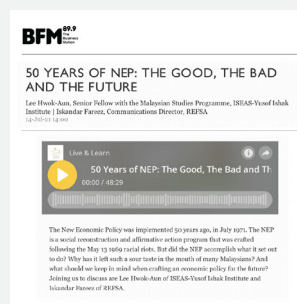
REFSA Research Director Ivy Kwek on vaccine distribution towards low-paid workers, 27 Feb 2021



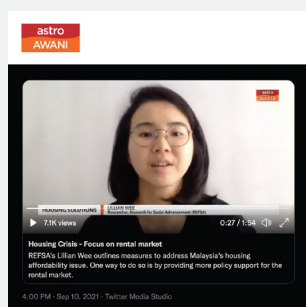
REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez spoke on BFM about underlying factors of youth unemployment and low wages, 21 Apr 2021



REFSA Economic Advisor Frederik Paulus interviewed by The Star on the gig economy, 30 Jun 2021



REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez spoke on BFM about NEP's key lessons, impacts and implications for Malaysia's future, 15 Jul 2021



REFSA Researcher Lilly Wee interviewed by Astro Awani on the housing crisis, 10 Sep 2021



REFSA Researcher Jaideep Singh interviewed by The Malaysian Reserve on gig economy workers' labour rights, 18 Nov 2021

Institutional Reform



It has been a tumultuous year for Malaysia in the quest for true **democracy and good governance**. Earlier in January, the Parliament was suspended when the government enacted a state of emergency, citing coronavirus as a threat to the country's security. By August the political turmoil culminated in the appointment of a new Prime Minister and a new-old cabinet.

Throughout the year, our researchers were on the pulse of the nation's institution and political development, actively writing and speaking about the state of the Parliament affairs.

As we continue to press for reforms and engage with parliamentarians, we researched and debated on the necessary mechanisms to ensure transparency and bipartisan scrutiny. We stressed the urgent need to reopen the Parliament, and participated in dialogues on the possibility of a hybrid Parliament so that emergency ordinances and the national recovery plan can be deliberated.

We opined that the freedom for political dissent forms important building blocks to achieve a functioning democracy for the nation. We joined other experts to talk about what to expect in terms of the political awakening among Gen Z, as well as the impact implementing Undi18 will have on the electoral process and democracy of our nation.

We continue to advocate for wide-ranging reforms in order to rebuild and strengthen our institutions.

What we did

- 29 opinion pieces, 5 press statements and 1 webinar.
- Cited in various media sources, appeared in interviews and participated in open and closed-door engagements.

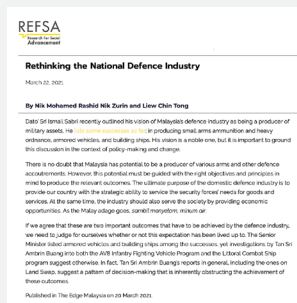
Impact

- Asserted the importance of **good governance and robust institutional reforms** through analysis and commentaries
- Participated in **closed door discussions** with various stakeholders, government agencies and parliamentarians.

Our Work



Article written by REFSA Research Coordinator Fakhruddin Rashid on Parliament's role in governance, 14 Jan 2021



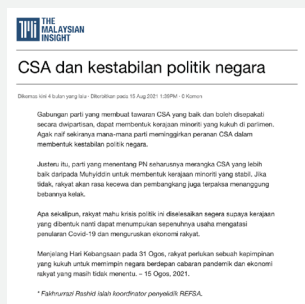
Article written by REFSA Research Nik Mohamed Rashid Nik Zurin and Liew Chin Tong on rethinking our national defence industry, 22 Mar 2021



Article written by REFSA Research Coordinator Fakhruddin Rashid on establishing a hybrid Parliament, 15 Jun 2021



Article written by REFSA Research Coordinator Fakhruddin Rashid on Parliamentary sitting, 28 Jun 2021



Article written by REFSA Research Coordinator Fakhruddin Rashid on the Confidence and Supply Agreement, 15 Aug 2021



REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez interviewed by Astro Awani on the Memorandum of Understanding between the government and PH coalition, 18 Oct 2021

In the News



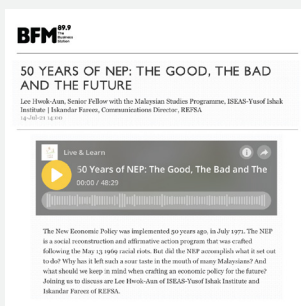
REFSA Research Coordinator Fakhurrizi Rashid on importance of a bipartisan office in Parliament, 20 Feb 2021



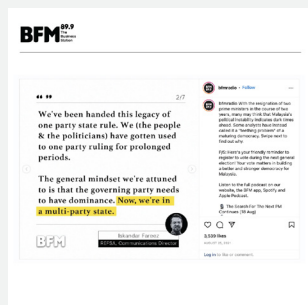
REFSA call for data transparency over COVID data, 2 Mar 2021



REFSA Research Coordinator Fakhurrizi Rashid interviewed on vital components in carrying out a hybrid Parliament, 8 Jun 2021



REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez on the New Economic Policy, 15 Jul 2021



REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez featured on BFM's Instagram on political instability within a maturing democracy, 25 Aug 2021



REFSA Comms Director Iskandar Fareez interviewed by South China Morning Post on PM Ismail Sabri's offers of bipartisanship, 12 Sep 2021

Other Work

2021 saw the return of our podcast **REFSA Reflections** for a second season, and a new **REFSA Soundbites** mini-video series, as we continue to bring across new, relevant insights and recommendations while reframing existing ones to better tackle the challenges of our times. To reach a wider audience, we explored various formats and platforms with the aim of creating policy conversations in an informative and engaging manner.

Digital Media

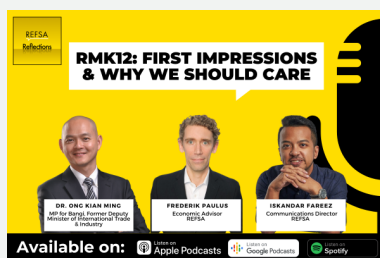
REFSA Reflections Podcasts



10 Policies to rebuild Malaysia better



The GLC dilemma



12th Malaysia Plan RMK 12:
First impressions and why should we care?

#REFSA101 Budget Soundbites Series



How can we broaden
and strengthen Malaysia's
national income?

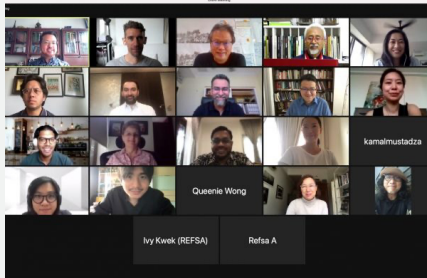


What is
Tax Identification Number
(TIN)?

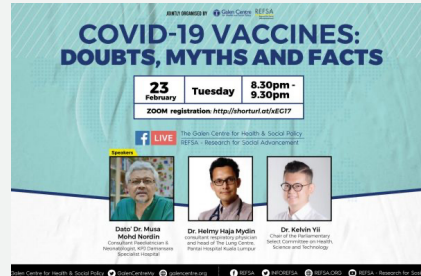


Windfall Tax vs.
Capital Gains Tax

Events



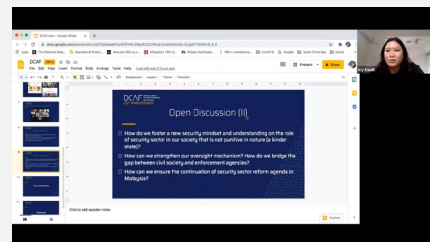
A roundtable on
Urban housing for the Youth,
22 Jan 2021



Forum COVID-19 Vaccines:
Doubts, Myths and Facts,
23 Feb 2021



Forum vaksin COVID-19:
Antara keraguan tahyul dan fakta,
3 Mar 2021



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and governance, REFSA x DCAF,
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The Malaysia Dialogue Series:
Business in Governance,
27 Jul 2021

Book Launch

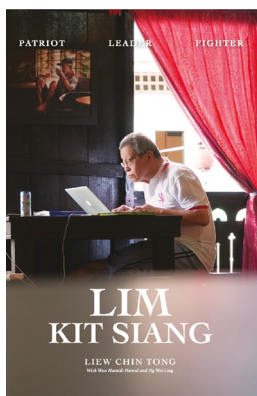
REFSA continues to serve as a publishing house, producing books and publications on important political and socio-economic issues.

In April 2021, we published and launched ***Lim Kit Siang – Patriot, Leader, Fighter***, a book that weaves Lim Kit Siang's life story into the fabric of the nation's political history. Through interviews, Kit's trials and tribulations as a father, a member of parliament, opposition leader and a patriotic Malaysian are laid bare.

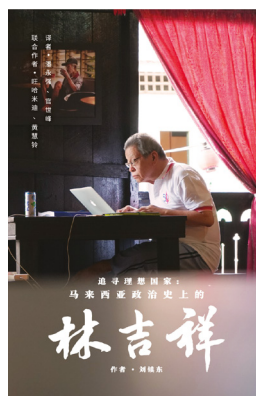
A synopsis of *Lim Kit Siang – Patriot, Leader, Fighter*

The history of Lim Kit Siang's life is also the history of the struggle for justice and democracy in Malaysia. That is what *Lim Kit Siang – Patriot, Leader, Fighter* makes clear by positioning itself as an unconventional biography. Taking the reader on a whirlwind tour of the country's political history since the 1940s, Liew Chin Tong, Wan Hamidi Hamid and Ng Wei Ling show Kit's footprints in the battle for a better Malaysia.

The book is an inspiring story of one man's undying hope for change. Lesser mortals would have given up after decades of dealing with autocratic Prime Ministers, imprisonment, saboteurs, traitors, gerrymandering and a hostile media environment. But even with the playing field tilted heavily against him, Kit soldiered on. This book emphasises that the end of one-party rule in Malaysia would not have happened if not for Kit's resolve and forward-thinking nature in laying the foundations to fix the broken system. Let this be a reminder to all Malaysians when we feel lost or disillusioned.



Launched online in April 2021



Launched online in October 2021

REFSA IN 2022

Over the past two years, the COVID-19 pandemic has heightened awareness of our nation's systemic fragility, particularly on the front of healthcare, employment, social protection, economic resilience and good governance.

In 2022, we remain committed to **addressing Malaysia's structural shortcomings** and providing **robust and sustainable policies** for building back better. We will continue to do so through **data-driven research, actionable policy recommendations, and creative approaches to education and advocacy** that ensure engagement with the wider community.

Building on our work in 2021, we hope to elevate and shift public discourse towards progressive economic and social policies with various stakeholders, policymakers and the public. Here are some of our key areas of focus in the coming year.

Our nation witnessed great political instability and uncertainty in policy leadership, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the premature appointment of two Prime Ministers over the past two years. Hence, as part of our **policies and institutional reform** agenda, we continue to push for greater transparency and efficiency in Malaysia's democratic structure and governance. The parliament must play a bigger role in governing with the executive for a truly accountable and trustworthy governance system. This remains crucial for safeguarding the democracy of our nation.

We will maintain our focus on **economics and socio-economic affairs**, through strategies and thought leadership on labour market transformation and targeted industrial policy. We also look to focus on **sustainable growth solutions** and ESG-related corporate governance. Lastly, an examination of fiscal reforms and public spending will also be prioritised, with the aim of developing Malaysia's state capability and positioning it for an ageing demography.

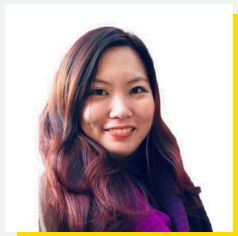
We must continue to ensure that **inclusive social protection policies** are in place. A robust and comprehensive social safety net is an integral part of an equitable economy and one of the cornerstones of a thriving and resilient community. Our focus for next year will be on women's participation in the workforce, the provision of child and elderly care, robust unemployment schemes, and protection for gig workers – all while providing clear structural and financing realisation strategies.

Furthering our right-to-housing agenda, we will continue to produce research and policy recommendations on **housing and urban policies** that focus on accessible and affordable housing for all. We will continue to push for universal housing and urban policy reforms such as increasing the protection and availability of rental housing, creating inclusive cities with better infrastructure and amenities, and a focus on repurposing building stock in urban centres through creative approaches to adaptive reuse.

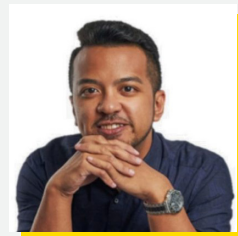
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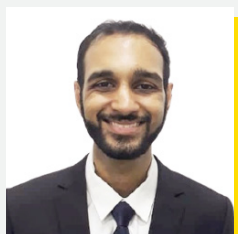
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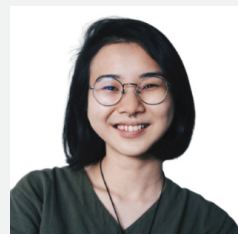
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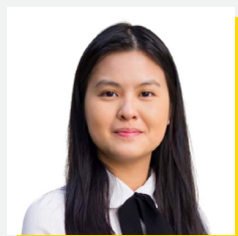
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We are grateful to all our donors throughout these years who believe in our work and support our endeavours. Seeing how our work impacts the nation's policy discourse reaffirms our determination to continue producing quality research output and fight for a better future.

Despite being a relatively small think tank, we commit ourselves to engage on high-impact issues.

We hope to serve as a place where major socio-economic concerns can be clearly identified, debated, and examined from different perspectives, in the interest of the public good and a better society, and humbly seek your support to make this possible.

If you share our values and beliefs to see a better, more equitable and sustainable Malaysia for all, please consider supporting us financially, in any amount that you are able to.

You can do so by **donating online via our website** or by subscribing to **Citizen Tong**, a newsletter by our Chairman, Liew Chin Tong that will eventually have a paid subscription. For further queries, please email **E Hun** at ehuntan@refsa.org.

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APPENDICES

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1. [REFSA DISCUSS #10] Urban Housing for the Youth Roundtable, 22 January 2021
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