

PERSPECTIVE

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The August Poll in Penang: A Perspective on Pakatan, its Partners and its Prospects

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Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (centre) with caretaker Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow (centre right), at the Penang Madani Solidarity Ceramah on 5 August 2023 held at Karpal Singh Drive during the campaigning period of the Penang 2023 State Election. Photo: DAP Pulau Pinang Facebook.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- In the August 2023 state election in Penang, Pakatan Harapan (PH) and its former foe Barisan Nasional (BN), secured a much-needed win for the Unity Government (UG).
- The UG won 29 of the state's 40 seats, which was slightly below its target of 30-32, but enough to secure the psychologically-important two-thirds majority in the assembly.
- While the UG retained Penang, its victory was partial. The results show that the UG's hold on Malay-majority seats was significantly eroded, leaving it almost exclusively dependent on non-Malay voters for support.
- PH's campaign also exposed internal fissures and questionable candidate choices within its component parties – notably the Democratic Action Party (DAP).
- PH's former foe and current campaign companion, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), also underperformed. The UG's new-found cooperation did not bear fruit, with UMNO winning a mere two seats – one by a whisker.
- Despite internal fissures, the opposition coalition Perikatan Nasional (PN) performed well, securing an unprecedented 11 seats. These were mostly in the northern and rural Malay-majority part of the mainland, but also included a vital foothold on the island.
- The pattern in Penang shows that, as with the country at large, the Unity Government has a good grip on the tiller, but the vessel is listing to one side. Unless concerted action is invested to right the ship, keeping a straight course will be challenging.

INTRODUCTION

Penang, like five other states in Malaysia, headed to the polls on August 12. Rather than holding their elections in November 2022 in tandem with parliamentary polls, three states helmed by Pakatan Harapan (PH) and three led by Perikatan Nasional (PN) decided to go to their full terms. This cluster of elections was billed as a crucial barometer for the Anwar Ibrahim administration.

The state is one of PH's electoral heartlands, which the coalition has held since 2008. As with Selangor, Penang has been vital for PH, serving as a showcase for policy initiatives as well as a platform to prepare aspiring party members for national office.

With a population of 1.8 million, Penang is one of Malaysia's smaller states. It is highly urbanized and wealthy, with a per capita income 25 per cent above the national average. Penang is diverse, with large Bumiputera (45.2 per cent), Chinese (44.5 per cent), and Indian (9.7 per cent) communities.¹

Of PH's component parties, the Democratic Action Party (DAP) has the strongest connection with Penang. National leaders such as Lim Guan Eng (Bagan) and Steven Sim (Bukit Mertajam) have parliamentary constituencies in the state, and Lim Kit Siang (Tanjong) and the late Karpal Singh (Jelutong and Bukit Gelugor) served as MPs for Penang in the past. The state is also important for Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) – particularly Anwar Ibrahim who has a four-decade association with the Permatang Pauh parliamentary seat.

Despite PH's incumbency in the state and its dominant performance in the 2013 and 2018 elections, results from the 2022 parliamentary election showed that the coalition was vulnerable in Malay-majority seats, particularly in the northern part of the mainland. BN and its lead party, the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), were in an even more precarious position with scant prospects of winning more than one or two seats.

Given the short interval between the 2022 parliamentary and 2023 state polls, observers expected a broadly similar performance on August 12. While the UG was expected to retain Penang, what was in question was the size of its majority in the state assembly. Party leaders also looked for indications that PH's partnership with UMNO translated into increased Malay support. And observers sought to establish whether PN's momentum from November 2022 would allow it to make inroads in the state.

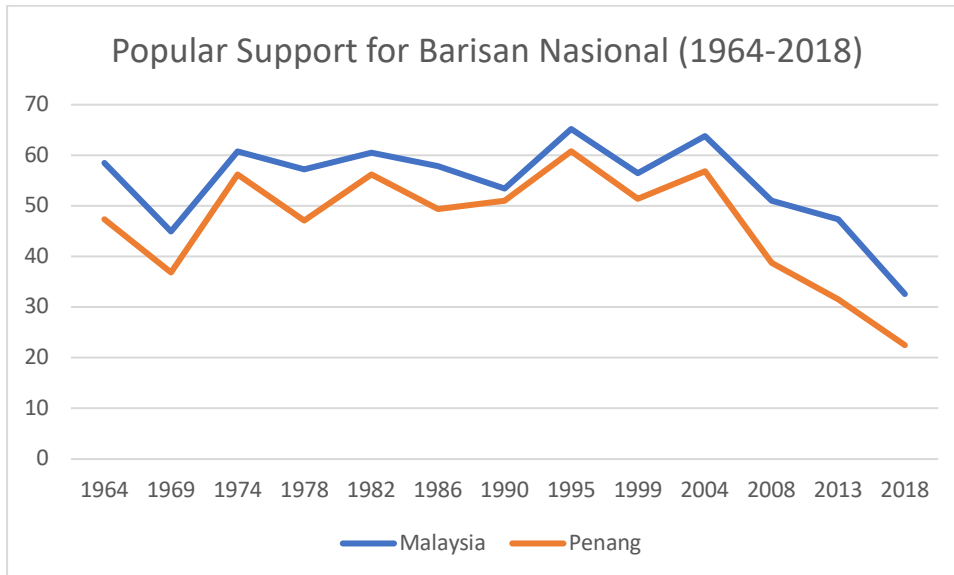
Drawing on trends in voting behaviour as well as fieldwork during the campaign period, this Perspective will examine the results of the August 2023 elections in Penang.² After this introduction, the second part will set out key aspects of the state's political context. The third will look at the campaigns and electoral strategies employed by the UG and PN. The fourth will analyse the results, and the final section will look at the implications.

BACKGROUND

Over the past decades, Penang's urbanized and diverse population has been open to political competition. Indeed, Penang fell to an opposition party, Gerakan in the 1969 election.

However, the party subsequently joined BN in 1972 in the wake of the 1969 racial riots.³ This alliance enabled BN to recapture the state and retain control until 2008. Despite its hold on power, BN usually tracked about 10 percentage points lower in Penang than the national average during this period (Figure One).

Figure One

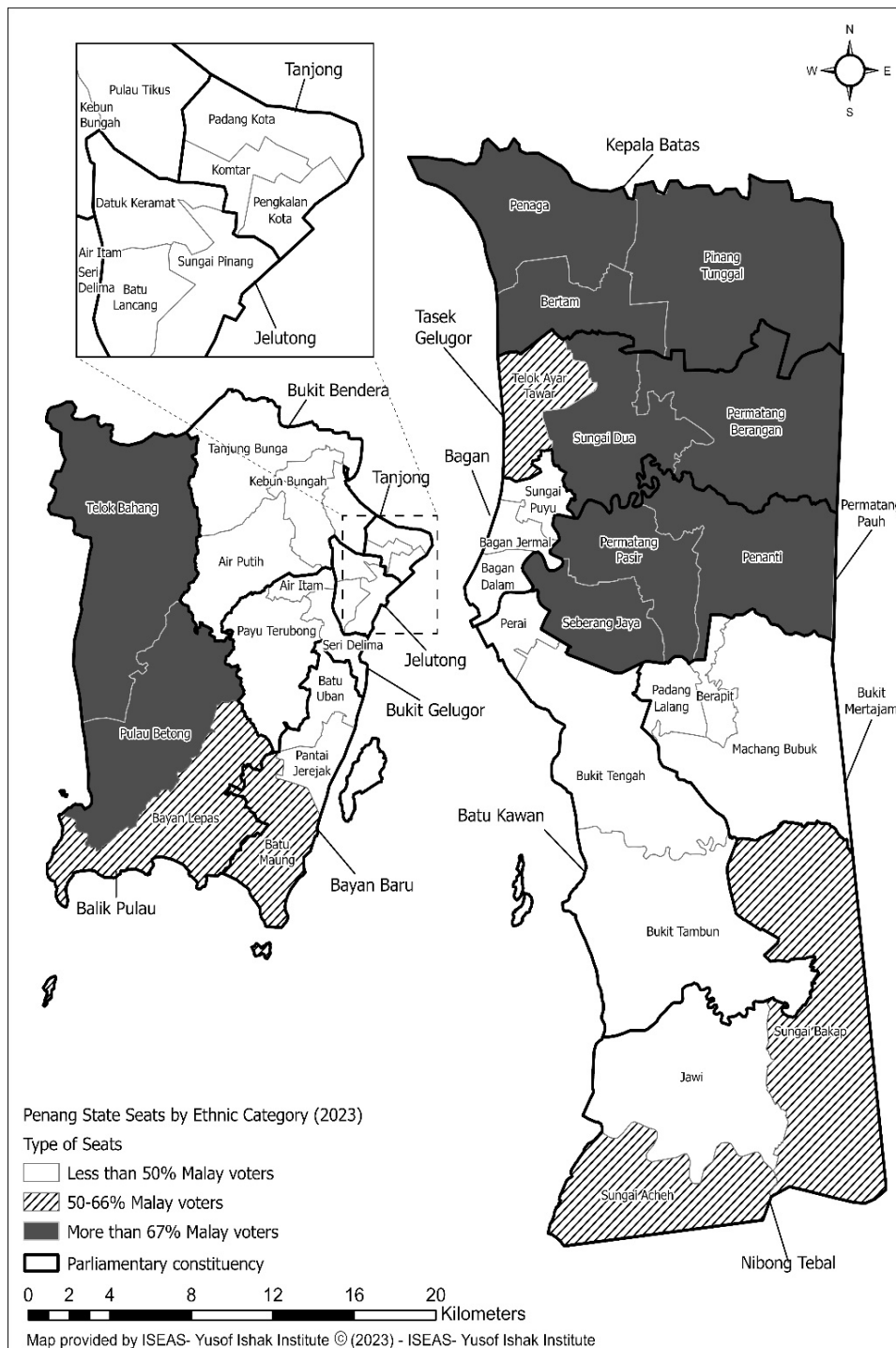


In 2008, the swing away from BN in urban and ethnically-mixed seats saw PH’s precursor Pakatan Rakyat securing 29 out of 40 seats in the state assembly.⁴ Following that, Pakatan Rakyat and then PH went from strength to strength, securing 30 seats in 2013 and 37 in 2018.⁵ However, the coalition’s 2018 results turned out to be its electoral pinnacle as, following the Sheraton Move, it lost four seats.⁶

Six parliamentary and 19 state seats are on the island, while seven parliamentary and 21 state seats are on the mainland (Figure Two). With one exception, every parliamentary constituency contains three state seats.⁷ Reflecting Penang’s ethnic diversity, there are 25 non-Malay majority state seats, of which 15 are in the northeastern aspect of the island in and around the capital George Town. The other ten seats are on the mainland in the larger urban centres of Perai and Bukit Mertajam, and then in a strip southwards along the coast.

There are five Malay-majority and ten Malay super-majority seats. The Malay-majority seats are in three locations. Two seats, Batu Maung and Bayan Lepas are on the more rural southern coast of the island. The other three are on the mainland, with two (Sungai Bakap and Sungai Acheh) on the border with Perak in the south, and another, Teluk Ayer Tawar, in the north. The remaining ten Malay super-majority seats are grouped in two locations. Eight are clustered in the northern aspect of the mainland, and two are on the westernmost aspect of the island.

Figure Two. State Seats by Ethnicity (2023)



The DAP has performed strongly in Penang, running in and continuously securing strong majorities in the same 19 seats since 2008. These include seats in and around George Town, as well as on the mainland in urban centres such as Bagan and Bukit Mertajam.

PKR has also had a consistent presence in the state. First securing nine seats in 2008, the party then won 10 seats in 2013 and 14 in 2018. PKR is present in a more diverse range of constituencies than DAP, with some ethnically-mixed seats in urban areas as well as Malay-majority seats on the mainland and the island.

The third PH component party, Amanah, made its debut in Penang in 2018, securing two rural, Malay-majority seats.

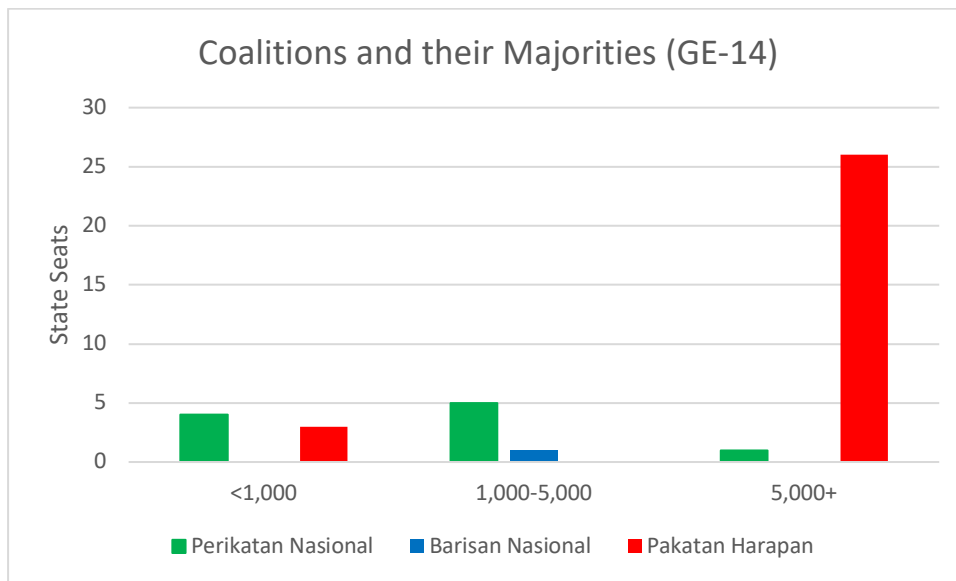
UMNO has had a consistent presence in Penang – usually securing 10 to 12 seats in each election. These include the state seats within the Kepala Batas parliamentary seat, associated with Abdullah Badawi, Malaysia's fifth prime minister. UMNO has also performed well in the state seats within Tasek Gelugor parliamentary constituency, as well as on the western aspect of the island. However, following its electoral drubbing in 2018, UMNO was left with only two state seats in Tasek Gelugor (Sungai Dua and Permatang Berangan).

Conversely, PAS has traditionally had little electoral traction in the state. It won one seat in each election from 1999 to 2018, usually in the central (Permatang Pasir) and northern part (Penaga) of the mainland. Bersatu won its first two seats, Bertam and Telok Bahang, in 2018. These seats are also Malay-majority and more rural in character.

In the November 2022 parliamentary election, PH did well, retaining 10 out of its 11 parliamentary seats. PN secured three parliamentary seats, all in the northern part of the mainland, including UMNO's Kepala Batas and Tasek Gelugor, as well as Permatang Pauh, that had been held by Anwar Ibrahim's daughter, Nurul Izzah.

Looking at voting patterns at the state seat level, PH prevailed in 29 seats – of which 26 were by more than a 5,000-vote majority. Assuming similar voting patterns in the August 2023 polls, PH was comfortably on course to retain power. However, the coalition looked vulnerable in Malay-majority seats such as Seberang Jaya, Bayan Lepas, and Pulau Betong. The results also indicated that UMNO was in dire straits, with this once-dominant party only securing a majority of votes in one seat – Bertam.

Figure Three



Conversely, these results indicated that PN would have won 10 state seats, largely at the expense of UMNO and PKR.⁸ However, not all wins were convincing, and PN prevailed in four seats by margins of less than 1,000 votes.

THE COALITIONS AND THEIR CAMPAIGNS

PH leaders dissolved the Penang state assembly on June 28. The Election Commission then set July 29 as nomination day, with the election scheduled for August 12.

Despite being a state government election, its framing as part of a referendum on the Anwar Ibrahim administration meant that the campaigns in Penang blended local and national issues, with senior political figures from both coalitions heavily involved in events.

The Unity Government

The UG's manifesto and candidate line-up were announced on August 1 in Butterworth on the mainland. High-profile PH leaders attended campaign events in the state, not least Anwar Ibrahim and Nurul Izzah from PKR, Mujahid Yusof Rawa from Amanah, and Anthony Loke from DAP.⁹

Several key themes permeated UG ceramahs and campaign events, including:

- The PH government's track record of economic management of the state, notably attracting an estimated RM 200 billion in approved manufacturing investment since 2008.¹⁰
- The desirability of continued political stability in the state and country, which would enable continued foreign investment – with recent investments by Tesla and Infineon cited as examples.¹¹

- The importance of having the same coalition in power at the federal and state levels, which would facilitate the funding of key projects, such as Penang's Light Rail Transport.¹²

The Unity Government's manifesto focussed on the state's economic competitiveness, as well as large-ticket infrastructure projects in the pipeline such as the LRT, high interchanges, and a cable car (Table One). The Manifesto also stressed livelihoods, cost-of-living issues, housing, and allocations for both Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

Given its incumbency, but cognizant of PN's momentum, PH's target was 30-32 seats in the assembly.¹³ The apportionment of seats between PH component parties was straightforward. Both the DAP and Amanah retained the same 19 and 2 seats, respectively, and PKR kept 13 out of its 14 seats.

However, discussions between PH and BN prior to the campaign were fraught. Given PH's haul of 37 seats in 2018, there were few seats to cede to BN. UMNO's original intention was to secure seats for itself first, before discussing possibilities for its BN partners, MCA and MIC. UMNO initially sought ten seats for itself but PH offered four.¹⁴ The end result was that UMNO would be allocated six seats, and MCA and MIC declared that they would not contest the elections.¹⁵

The seats that UMNO was allocated included its two, plus the three seats that PAS and Bersatu won in 2018. In addition, PKR ceded Sungai Acheh, which it won in 2018 but subsequently lost following the Sheraton Move. UMNO also wanted one state seat within the Permatang Pauh parliamentary seat, arguing that its membership base in the area would be an asset for campaigns in all three state seats.¹⁶ However, this request was not granted. Despite the intense negotiations, there appeared to be little overt dissatisfaction on either side after this, with joint walkabouts and grassroots meetings beginning in June.¹⁷

Surprisingly, the Penang state election raised a considerable degree of tension within the DAP, belying its reputation as a disciplined party.¹⁸ There were rumours whether the incumbent Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow would seek a second term or if his predecessor, Lim Guan Eng, would seek to return. The second possibility was precluded by a 2018 amendment to the state constitution that barred any assemblyperson from seeking a third term as CM.¹⁹ Consequently, the focus shifted to whether Lim would seek to topple Chow or stack the incoming state cabinet with his supporters. Chow's confirmation as the CM candidate came rather late – only in mid-July after the state assembly had been dissolved.²⁰

This tension affected the candidate selection process. The DAP fielded eight new candidates in its line-up. Five of those dropped were members of the previous state cabinet, and included three veteran assemblypersons, notably: P Ramasamy (Deputy Chief Minister); Chong Eng (Social Development and non-Islamic Religious Affairs); and Phee Boon Poh (Welfare and Environment).²¹

The official argument was that the party was seeking to field younger candidates.²² However, two of the state cabinet members that were dropped, Yeoh Soon Hin (Tourism and Creative Economy) and Soon Lip Chee (Youth and Sports) were relatively young. Furthermore, a one-

term state assembly person, Satees Muniandy (Bagan Dalam) was also dropped, and a local councillor tipped to replace Ramasamy in Perai was bypassed.²³ Eyebrows were also raised by Lim's decision to retain his Air Putih state seat, despite his previous three terms as an assemblyman and his concurrent status as MP for Bagan.²⁴

Perikatan Nasional

Cognizant of the state's ethnic diversity as well as Gerakan's long tenure in Penang, PN approached the election somewhat differently. There was less airtime given to national-level figures such as PAS President Hadi Awang and Bersatu Chairman Muhyiddin Yassin, or direct comparisons to the states under PN.²⁵ Much of the messaging was by Gerakan party president, Dominic Lau, and kept a clear focus on economic issues as opposed to religious and cultural ones.

Key themes included the following:

- PH's administration of the state, notably the degree to which economic policy benefited investors and foreign workers at the expense of locals, as well as the disparity in development between the island and the mainland.²⁶
- Governance issues, with PH's commitment to anti-corruption being questioned, given its alliance with UMNO, as well as the degree to which Malays had positions of responsibility in the state cabinet.²⁷
- The PN manifesto for Penang had 33 pledges across eight areas, but was noticeably silent on religious issues, instead devoting considerable attention to livelihood and environmental issues (Table One).

Given PH's long hold on the state, expectations of PN's performance were modest. PN Chairman Muhyiddin Yassin targeted some 20 seats, but other estimates were more circumspect, normally around 10-12 seats.²⁸

Inter-party negotiations were complex. Gerakan was allocated 19 seats for its candidates. While this was the most among PN member parties, they were almost all in very hostile terrain, namely non-Malay majority seats. Questions were raised by Bersatu and PAS about Gerakan's capacity to manage the campaign and field sufficient candidates of electable quality – with party president Dominic Lau being a notable exception.²⁹ Bersatu ran in 11 seats, of which three were contested by representatives from their non-Malay supporter's wing. PAS contested in 10 seats, and also fielded 3 non-Muslim candidates. Relative to Gerakan, the other two parties were on much more favourable terrain, running in Malay-majority seats.

Conscious of Gerakan's limited electoral viability and reluctant to name a Bersatu or PAS member who could potentially alienate voters, PN did not name a candidate for Chief Minister. This allowed PH and UMNO to attack PN for its ambiguity and also ask if Gerakan was really the lead party in the coalition and if it would be able to control PAS.³⁰

The pertinence of these questions was raised by tensions between PAS and Gerakan. Dominic Lau requested Bayan Lepas, a Malay-majority seat on the island, whose demographic

composition made it more electorally viable. However, grassroots PAS leaders in the area strenuously objected, arguing that their party should have the seat.

Gerakan ultimately prevailed, but subsequently spilled out. Lau attended a PN campaign event to pay his respects to PAS president Hadi Awang, but was turned away.³¹ PAS leaders ultimately apologized,³² but still did not commit to helping Lau campaign in his seat.³³ PH leaders argued that PN's commitment to multiculturalism was not genuine and Gerakan was not a fully-fledged member of the coalition.³⁴

RESULTS

Despite fears that the turnout would be low, an estimated 72.7 per cent of eligible voters went to the polls in Penang. PH secured 27 seats and UMNO, 2. While slightly below the pre-election target, this was still above a two-thirds majority in the assembly.

Of the PH parties, the DAP did the best, retaining all of its 19 seats. Most of these larger urban seats were retained with majorities above 7,000, and three (Payu Terubong, Batu Lancang, and Sungai Puyu) won by some 20,000 votes or more. With this, the party cemented its stronghold on the state's urban and mixed seats.

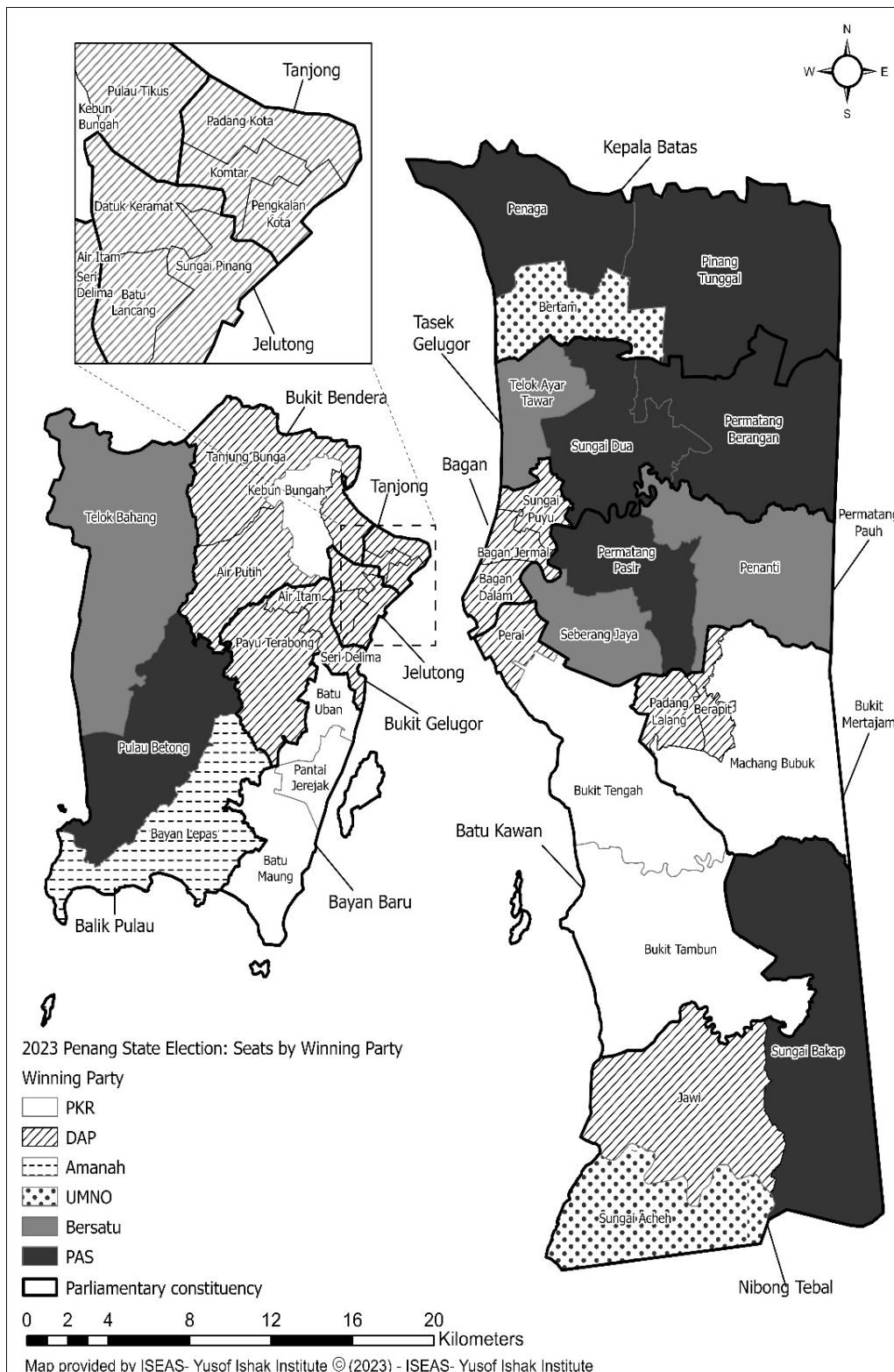
PKR did not fare so well, losing 6 out of its 13 seats. As with DAP, it did very well in ethnically-mixed seats such as Machang Bubuk, Batu Uban, and Bukit Tambun, which it secured with majorities above 15,000. However, it fared markedly less well in Malay-majority seats such as Pinang Tunggai, as well as its two seats within Permatang Pauh (Seberang Jaya and Penanti), where it was swept from power. Amanah also had a middling performance, retaining only one of its seats (Bayan Lepas) against Gerakan and losing the other (Permatang Pasir) to PAS.³⁵

For UMNO, the polls were borderline disastrous. The party won just two seats, Bertam and Sungai Acheh – the second by a mere 124 votes. UMNO's hold on its northern redoubt was hollowed out, and its performance in Bertam was arguably due to Reezal Merican's stature as a former cabinet member and extensive personal networks in the seat. The other high-profile candidate, Sheik Hussein Mydin, was beaten in Sungai Dua by the PAS Penang leader, Fauzi Yusoff by more than 5,500 votes.

Given its low base, PN's performance was strong, with the coalition netting 11 seats. PAS and Bersatu accounted for seven and four seats respectively, with Gerakan losing all its contests. Most of PN's seats are located in the mainland's north in the parliamentary seats of Kepala Batas, Tasek Gelugor, and Permatang Pauh. However, in contrast to the voting patterns seen in November 2022, PN secured two seats on the island (Pulau Betong and Telok Bahang), indicating a more pervasive presence of PAS's grassroots network in that area than previously thought.³⁶

There was very little traction for third-party candidates, with none registering more than 1,000-1,500 votes and having little to no influence on the outcome.

Figure Four. Penang State Election – Seats by Winning party



THE OUTLOOK

Although it witnessed an important decrease in the size of its majorities in the respective assemblies, PH ultimately retained control of its three states in the August 2022 election. Coupled with the UG's sizeable majority in parliament, it is likely that the Anwar Ibrahim administration will last a full term.

In Penang, a refreshed state cabinet has been sworn in, including two new Deputy Chief Ministers, Mohamad Abdul Hamid (PKR), and Jagdeep Singh Deo (DAP).³⁷ UMNO was brought into the cabinet through offering one of its assemblymen, Rashidi Zinol, the trade, entrepreneurial, and rural development portfolio.

That said, there are several lingering issues facing the re-elected state administration.

First, the doubts pertaining to Chow Kon Yeow's hold on the Chief Minister's position kindled by the campaign have persisted. Despite PH's victory, rumours about Chow being replaced by the party leadership have continued, sapping his political capital.³⁸

Moreover, the fallout for the DAP from the candidate selection process has rumbled on. Three of the dropped candidates came out publicly to criticize the internal workings of the party, particularly the centralisation of power. The former DCM, P. Ramasamy, has since quit the DAP and taken up quite a critical stance vis-à-vis the party as well as PH's commitment to reform.³⁹ His departure was followed by other DAP members, some of whom have questioned the degree to which the needs and concerns of Indian voters are adequately dealt with.⁴⁰ Over the long-term, this could provide ammunition for opposition-led campaigns vis-a-vis Indian voters.

More widely, the UG is vulnerable to charges that it is not sufficiently representative. Of its 29 seats, 25 are non-Malay majority. PKR and Amanah secured but one Malay-majority seat each, namely Batu Maung and Bayan Lepas. UMNO has also not been able to significantly bolster the UG's stable of seats. Conversely, the UG's hold on the state is underpinned by PN's non-performance in non-Malay majority seats - of which all remain with PH.

More widely, PH's strategic compact with BN is a mixed bag. Beyond the scant electoral terrain and the nominal boost to representativity afforded by the alliance, the association with UMNO left PH vulnerable regarding issues pertaining to corruption and good governance.

While the UG's hold over Penang, Selangor, and Negri Sembilan looks secure for now, the Anwar Ibrahim administration's honeymoon is now over, and the Prime Minister and his coalition remain vulnerable regarding issues as they pertain to Malay voters. He will need to invest political capital decisively in the months ahead.

APPENDIX
Table One. Highlights of the UG and PN Manifestos

	Unity Government	Perikatan Nasional
Welfare and Socio-Economic Wellbeing	Social Development Fund for needy groups financed by a levy on medical tourism	RM60 million in payments for vulnerable groups
Public Transport	Light Rail Transit (LRT) Newly-launched ferry service Highway interchanges Cable car system in Bukit Bendera.	Against the LRT, proposing an Autonomous Rail Transit
Economic Development	Scaled-down Penang South Island to house high value-added industries High Tech Park in Bertam Medi-tech Centre in Batu Kawan Global Business Services Centre	Against Penang South Island due to its potential impact on livelihoods RM3.5 million to promote tourism Develop a Penang Medical City Promote traditional and alternative medicine
Livelihoods	Payments to delivery and taxi drivers Microcredit scheme for small-scale entrepreneurs	RM10 million in microcredit for SMEs RM5 million for upgrading equipment and boats for fishermen Payments to delivery, taxi, and trishaw drivers
Education	RM60 million for government-aided schools Scholarships and laptops for B40 members	RM14 million in funding for religious and vernacular schools, Payments and scholarships for students RM1 million for parent-teacher associations
Skills Development	Establish a technical and vocational education institution to train 20,000 workers	RM1.5 million for industrial training
Housing	220,000 affordable houses 100,000 of these for low-income families 22,000 rent-to-own units	Increasing the supply of houses under RM100,000
Governance	Digital Service Centre to improve customer service in state government constituencies	Development of apps to improve service delivery in state government constituencies Youth leadership programme

Religion	Assistance to B40 members to perform the Hajj RM20 million for religious schools RM10 million for non-Islamic places of worship (up to 2028)	
Civil Society	RM2 million annual grant to NGOs	
Environment and Water	RM100 million for flood mitigation RM1 billion for water supply	RM5 million for upgrading reservoirs RM5 million for rehabilitating rivers Planting 1 million trees

Table Two. Seats that Flipped

State Code	State Name	Ethnic Composition	Winning Party 2018	Winning Party 2023
N02	Bertam	M(68.9) C(21.8) I(8.7)	Bersatu	UMNO
N03	Pinang Tunggal	M(78.8) C(17.1) I(3.7)	PKR	PAS
N04	Permatang Berangan	M(86.7) C(6.3) I(6.6)	UMNO	PAS
N05	Sungai Dua	M(81.1) C(16.0) I(2.4)	UMNO	PAS
N06	Telok Ayar Tawar	M(64.8) C(23.8) I(10.1)	PKR	Bersatu
N10	Seberang Jaya	M(68.5) C(18.3) I(12.1)	PKR	Bersatu
N11	Permatang Pasir	M(75.4) C(22.1) I(2.1)	Amanah	PAS
N12	Penanti	M(79.8) C(17.8) I(1.7)	PKR	Bersatu
N20	Sungai Bakap	M(59.4) C(22.5) I(17.4)	PKR	PAS
N21	Sungai Acheh*	M(63.8) C(27.7) I(7.6)	PKR	UMNO
N39	Pulau Betong	M(66.3) C(28.4) I(4.3)	PKR	PAS

* This seat was ceded from PKR to UMNO.

ENDNOTES

¹ <https://penanginstitute.org/resources/key-penang-statistics/visualisations-of-key-indicators/penang-population-and-demographics/>. Penang also has some 132,200 non-citizens living in the state.

² To answer these questions, this perspective analyses data on voting trends over time, and carried out key informant interviews during 11-17 June in Penang and Kuala Lumpur and participant observations of ceramahs and election events in Penang from 1-8 August 2023.

³ At this point, the ruling coalition was still named the Alliance; it subsequently changed its name to BN the following year.

⁴ The coalition was called Pakatan Rakyat at the time and included the Islamic party, PAS. That year, the coalition also secured Perak and Kedah, and PAS retained control of Kelantan. Following PAS' exit from the grouping and the subsequent incorporation of Parti Amanah Negara, the coalition was renamed Pakatan Harapan in 2015.

⁵ Unlike most other states, Penang was bypassed in the most recent electoral redelineation exercise in 2018, and so has had the same number of parliamentary constituencies (14) and state seats (40) since 2003.

⁶ The state representatives for Bersatu in Bertam and Telok Bahang crossed the floor, as did the PKR assemblymen for Sungai Acheh and Seberang Jaya – reducing PH's ranks to 33. In March 2023, PH invoked the state's anti-party hopping law to force the four assemblymen to vacate their seats.

⁷ The exception is Bukit Bendera which has four state seats within its borders.

⁸ <https://fulcrum.sg/the-unity-government-preventing-a-partial-victory-in-the-polls/>

⁹ Unity Government Manifesto Launch and Announcement of Candidates, Butterworth Arena, 1 August 2023; Unity Government Ceramah, Karpal Singh Drive, Jelutong, 5 August 2023.

¹⁰ Unity Government Manifesto Launch and Announcement of Candidates, Butterworth Arena, 1 August, 2023; Unity Government Ceramah Kelompok (small-scale ceramah) for Johari Kassim, PKR Candidate for Seberang Jaya, Taman Sembilang, Seberang Jaya, 3 August 2023; Unity Government Ceramah, Karpal Singh Drive, Jelutong, 5 August 2023.

¹¹ <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/malaysia-eager-elon-musk-invest-091728649.html> ; <https://www.infineon.com/cms/en/about-infineon/press/press-releases/2023/INFXX202308-140.html>

¹² <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/05/06/funds-will-be-allocated-to-expedite-penang-lrt-project-says-anwar#:~:text=%22The%20federal%20government%20will%20add,federal%20government%2C%22%20he%20said.>

¹³ <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/06/26/state-polls-it-will-be-satisfying-to-win-30-to-32-seats-in-penang-says-chow>

¹⁴ Interview with UMNO campaign organizer, George Town, 14 June 2023.

¹⁵ <https://www.nst.com.my/news/politics/2023/07/927657/mca-mic-sit-out-state-elections>

¹⁶ The party has some 100 branches and an estimated 20,000 members in the Permatang Pauh division. Interview with UMNO campaign organizer, George Town, 14 June 2023. That said, some have observed a decline in membership for the party, even in the northern part of the state. Interview with former Penang state government employee, Penang, 12 June 2023.

¹⁷ Interview with PKR party members from the mainland, Penang 12 June 2023; and DAP candidate, Penang 13 June 2023. However, these events were essentially PH parties with UMNO, and very little participation from MIC or MCA. Correspondence with former Penang state government employee, 7 November 2023.

¹⁸ Francis E. Hutchinson and Kevin Zhang "Malaysia's Democratic Action Party: Background and Inner Workings", *ISEAS Perspective* 2021/118.

¹⁹ <https://www.nst.com.my/news/nation/2023/05/906131/any-penang-cm-who-has-served-2-terms-cannot-be-reappointed-same-post>

²⁰ <https://www.nst.com.my/news/politics/2023/07/930805/chow-penang-cm-candidate-second-term>

²¹ The details of these changes were released late, with many of these party members learning about the decision immediately prior to their public announcement. Correspondence with former Penang state government employee, 7 November 2023.

<https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2023/07/27/storm-brewing-in-penang>

²² <https://www.malaysianow.com/news/2023/07/26/penang-dap-drops-5-state-excocs-as-part-of-revitalisation-efforts>

²³ The DAP candidate for Perai was Sundarajoo Sumu. Sundarajoo has a background in the real estate sector, and critics argued that this fed into the narrative that the DAP is often influenced by big developers.

²⁴ The stormy relationship between PH and the Malaysian United Democratic Alliance (MUDA) also complicated matters. Despite the youth-focussed party's nominal alliance with PH, fraught seat negotiations led the party to declare that it would compete independently. The party fielded three candidates in Penang – all in seats held by Pakatan Harapan. One, Perai, was held by DAP, and two – Pantai Jerejak and Batu Uban – were PKR seats. MUDA's campaign in the state was largely influenced by the civil society agenda, focussing on political reform and environmental concerns. Interview with senior MUDA official, Petaling Jaya 21 June 2023; <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/08/08/syed-saddiq-muda-aims-to-be-peoples-opposition-in-penang-if-pakatan-retains-state/84283>.

²⁵ Perikatan Nasional Ceramah Kelompok for Dominic Lau, Gerakan/Perikatan Nasional candidate for Bayan Lepas, Kampung Masjid, Bayan Lepas, 4 August 2023; Perikatan Nasional Ceramah Kelompok for Izhar Shah, Bersatu Candidate for Seberang Jaya, Kampung Pertama, Seberang Jaya, 5 August 2023; Perikatan Nasional Manifesto Launch and Announcement of Candidates, Hotel Seri, Kepala Batas, 7 August 2023. There were also differences between PN parties, with Gerakan more prone to larger ceramah-style events, and PAS and Bersatu focussing on smaller events in mosques and community centres.

²⁶ Interview with a Penang Bersatu member, Kuala Lumpur, 21 June 2023; Perikatan Nasional Ceramah Kelompok for Dominic Lau, Gerakan/Perikatan Nasional candidate for Bayan Lepas, Kampung Masjid, Bayan Lepas, 4 August 2023.

²⁷ Perikatan Nasional Ceramah Kelompok for Dominic Lau, Gerakan/Perikatan Nasional candidate for Bayan Lepas, Kampung Masjid, Bayan Lepas, 4 August 2023.

²⁸ <https://www.nst.com.my/news/politics/2023/06/921225/state-polls-pn-can-win-20-seats-penang-says-muhyiddin>; interview with a Penang Bersatu member, Kuala Lumpur, 21 June 2023; interview with Bersatu strategist, Kuala Lumpur, 23 June 2023.

²⁹ Interview with a Penang Bersatu member, Kuala Lumpur, 21 June 2023.

³⁰ <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/669255>

³¹ <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/08/03/gerakan-chief-dominic-lau-says-doesnt-feel-kecil-hati-over-pas-ceramah-snub-to-settle-issues-among-perikatan-parties-internally/83335>

³² <https://www.nst.com.my/news/politics/2023/08/938542/pas-apologises-disrespecting-gerakans-lau>

³³ <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2023/08/05/were-short-of-people-use-own-machinery-pas-tells-lau/>

³⁴ <https://www.nst.com.my/news/politics/2023/08/938392/penang-ph-chief-gerakan-have-some-self-respect-and-withdraw-polls-pn>

³⁵ The strong performance by the DAP and PKR in their urban seats was all the more notable given that MUDA and several independent candidates targeted seats such as Perai, Pantai Jerejak, and Bagan Dalam.

³⁶ Interview with former employee of the Penang state government, Penang, 12 June 2023.

³⁷ A potential conflict between UMNO and PKR over a Deputy Chief Minister position was precluded by the former's underwhelming performance.

³⁸ <https://www.thestar.com.my/opinion/columnists/analysis/2023/10/21/are-chows-days-as-penang-cm-numbered>

³⁹ <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2023/08/10/dap-veteran-ramasamy-quits-party-citing-political-purge-as-reason/84518>

⁴⁰ <https://www.thevibes.com/articles/news/97576/concern-grows-on-daps-stance-as-another-indian-member-resigns>; <https://www.theborneopost.com/2023/08/10/dap-veteran-ramasamy-quits-party-citing-political-purge-as-reason/>

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