

News Release

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PM's approval rating remains unchanged

BANGI –A survey carried among voters in Peninsular Malaysia found that the Prime Minister's approval rating had remained unchanged at 52% in March 2014 compared to December 2013. However, those dissatisfied with the Prime Minister's performance increased slightly from 40% in December 2013 to 44% in March 2014.

The timing of this poll took place after the increase of electricity tariffs and during the on-going water rationing in Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Melaka, disbursement of the Bantuan Rakyat 1Malaysia (BR1M) to households and individuals with incomes under RM4000 per month, the Anwar Ibrahim guilty verdict as well as the MH370 missing airplane crisis.

The survey also asked voters to assess the perceived performance of the Prime Minister in addressing critical issues. The results as follows:

Performance Areas	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Don't Know/No Response
Managing the Economy	46%	51%	3%
Taking care of race relations	58%	39%	3%
Taking care of religious harmony	58%	37%	5%
Improving the country's image internationally	59%	36%	5%
Fighting corruption in the government	33%	60%	7%
Reducing wastage in government expenditure	32%	60%	8%
Understanding the people's burden in facing rising cost of living	39%	57%	4%
Average	46%	49%	5%

The number of respondents expressing "happiness" with the government had improved slightly from 38% in December 2013 to 42% in March 2014. As noted the table below, perceptions towards government improved the most among rural voters and those living in households under RM1500 per month. In our opinion, the improvements could be attributed to the BR1M cash transfer payments to 5.4 million recipients nationwide which began at the end of February and through March 2014.

Table 2: Perception Towards Government (expressing "happiness")

Segment	March 2014	December 2013	Variance
Malay	57%	52%	+5%
Chinese	13%	10%	+3%

Indian	37%	40%	-3%
Voters under 40 years old	37%	36%	+1%
Urban voters	33%	34%	-1%
Rural voters	57%	44%	+13%
Men	38%	32%	+6%
Women	46%	43%	+3%
Household income under RM1,500/month	63%	54%	+9%

With respect to issues of concern to voters, worries over the economy, particularly in the form of rising costs and inflation eased slightly to 61% in March 2014, down from 67% in December 2013.

With respect to the country's direction, the survey found that those who felt the country was "headed in the right direction" decreased from 42% in December 2013 to 38% in March 2014 survey. Meanwhile the numbers of those who thought the country was headed in the wrong direction remained at 49%.

Handling of MH370

Given the crisis emerging from the disappearance of flight MH370, the survey asked voters their perceptions on the handling of the crisis by the government. The survey found that 43% of respondents were satisfied with the government's handling while 50% was dissatisfied.

The survey was carried out by the Merdeka Center for Opinion Research between 7th and 20th March 2014. For this survey, 1,005 registered voters comprising 60% Malay, 31% Chinese and 9% Indian respondents were interviewed by telephone. Respondents were selected on the basis of random stratified sampling along ethnicity, gender and state of residence. The interviews were carried out in the preferred language of the respondents.

About Merdeka Center for Opinion Research

Merdeka Center for Opinion Research was formally established in 2001 as an independent organization focused on public opinion research and socio-economic analysis. Merdeka's mission is to act as a bridge between ordinary Malaysians and other stakeholders with the leading members of the nation – by collecting public opinion studies and expressing them through survey results, analysis and position papers. For details, visit: www.merdeka.org

Contact:

Ibrahim Suffian
 Director - Programs
 Mobile: 6012 379 1940
 Email: ben@merdeka.org

Tan Seng Keat
 Research Manager
 Mobile: 6012 395 0316
 Email: sengkeat@merdeka.org