

MEDIA RELEASE
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**The Merdeka Center December 2007 Voter Perceptions Survey:
Concerns over inflation, economy and PM's approval rating**

BANGI - 25th January, 2008: As Malaysian voters face the impending general elections voter concerns remain fixated on inflation and crime, and in the wake of recent street demonstrations, ethnic equality issues have come to the fore.

The telephone survey of 1,026 randomly selected registered voters aged 21 and above was conducted by the Merdeka Center from 14th to 19th December 2007. The survey covers Peninsular Malaysia excluding Sabah and Sarawak.

Respondents were selected in random stratified sampling method along the lines of state, ethnicity, gender and age.

The opinion poll was carried out to gauge voter perceptions of current issues, the economy and national leadership.

"This poll is part of the series of surveys that we carry out from time to time in order to measure voter sentiments on current issues and the economy. We hope that this data helps Malaysian voters and policymakers understand the needs of voters and address their concerns based on factual findings," said Ibrahim Suffian, director of the Merdeka Center.

"As these voters will make critical decisions in the coming elections, it is important to start gauging their views and find ways to surface those views," he added.

Public concerns over inflation remain significant despite demonstrations

While a large part of media coverage during the survey covered the issue of demonstrations, the survey revealed that a plurality of voters were more concerned over rising prices (20%) and cost of living, this is followed by worries over ethnic equality issues (17%) and crime (12%).

Aside from inflation, the survey found public concern over ethnic equality issues to be second highest – mentioned by one out of every six respondents contacted. Concern over this issue was likely the result of the HINDRAF demonstration and subsequent police action.

Flagging optimism over the economy

Overall, public optimism over the economy for the coming year appeared pessimistic with only 41% expressing positive views. A small majority (53%) of Malay voters continued to express optimism while Chinese voters appeared very pessimistic with only 19% expressing optimism and Indian voters were also pessimistic with only 43% expressing in the positive.

Satisfaction in the government's ability to manage the economy

Despite the pessimistic outlook, a large majority of the Malaysian voters report significant degree of satisfaction in the government's ability to manage the economy with 13% report "very satisfied" and 42% report "somewhat satisfied".

The Prime Minister's approval rating slides to 61%

After effects of the BERSIH and HINDRAF demonstrations continued to ripple through the political space and one month after the demonstrations, the survey found that Prime Minister's Abdullah Badawi's approval rating had slid by 10 percentage point since 8th November 2007. Approval ratings decreased by 8%, 5% and 41% among Malay, Chinese and Indian voters respectively.

The full results of the survey are available for download from the Merdeka Center's website www.merdeka.org

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About Merdeka Center

Merdeka Center was formally established in 2001 as an independent organization focused on public opinion research and socio-economic analysis. Its members are comprised of social scientists and professionals with qualifications in economics, communications, marketing, and law. Merdeka Center's mission is to act as a bridge between Malaysians and the leading members of their society – by collecting public opinion and expressing them through survey results, analysis and position papers. For more information, please visit www.merdeka.org

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