

News Release

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Survey: Malaysians split over the direction of national unity

BANGI - Malaysian public appear split in their views over the direction of where national unity was headed with 48% saying that the country was becoming more united but 43% feeling that it was becoming more divided while a further 9% were uncertain or did not know. Bickering among the country's politicians and political parties along with unease over inter-ethnic relations were cited by 13% and 9% of respondents respectively when asked about the issues that divide the people.

Among non-Bumiputera respondents, the survey found only 39% responded positively towards the One Malaysia concept while a plurality, 46% felt that it was a ploy to win non-Malay political support while 16% said they did not know or refused to answer.

The survey found that Bumiputera respondents were also split on the who they felt benefited from government assistance – 48% felt that government programs “benefited ordinary people” but 45% believed that government programs “benefited the rich and politically connected”.

The Merdeka Center survey which covered public attitudes towards national unity, trust in government and democratic participation conducted between late January and April of this year, found that Malaysians were united in their lack of interest in national politics and sense of powerlessness in influencing government. In related questions, the survey found that 58% of Malaysians reported that they were not interested in the country's politics while an even larger proportion, 66% said that they were incapable of bringing about the changes they wish to see happen in the country.

When asked what changes they wished to see happen in the country among a fixed list of items, 27% chose “making the country more democratic”, 20% wanted “making our education system world class” and 11% wanted a “reduction in the gap between rich and poor Malaysians”, among others.

The survey found that Malaysians were generally united in feeling of job security as well as economic pressure, with 67% reporting feeling confident that their jobs were secure in the coming year but at the same time, 63% admitted that “making ends meet was a struggle”.

Results from the survey also reveal that members of the public were skeptical towards government with respect to prudence in public spending and providing access to aid. 53% reported that they disagreed with the statement that the government was spending public funds prudently while 63% were not confident that the government's assistance was

reaching the needy. The survey found marked differences between public attitudes in Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak, for example, only 35% of Peninsular Malaysia respondents agreed that the government was spending public funds prudently while the figure for Sabah and Sarawak was 45%.

Among particular ethnic groups, the survey found that among Malay respondents, 70% agreed that corruption among the community's leaders was the main threat to Malay/Bumiputra's political position as opposed to "demands made by other races in the country".

The poll was conducted between 21st January and 26th April 2010 to gauge public attitudes towards a number of issues such as national unity, integrity, democratic participation and affirmative action. A total of 3141 adult Malaysian citizens aged 19 and above were interviewed across Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak comprising 51% Malays, 26% Chinese, 7% Indian, 9% other Muslim Bumiputeras and 7% non-Muslim Bumiputeras were interviewed by telephone in the poll. Respondents were selected on the basis of random stratified sampling along ethnicity, gender, age and state of residence.

View topline and other findings at www.merdeka.org

About Merdeka Center for Opinion Research

Merdeka Center for Opinion Research is an independent, non-partisan 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 providing dispassionate presentation of public opinion survey results, analysis and position papers.

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