



News Release

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Majority of voters lack awareness and comprehension of 1MDB controversy

BANGI –A survey carried as a collaboration between BFM Radio and the Merdeka Center among voters in Peninsular Malaysia found that a very large majority (69%) of voters were not fully aware what the 1MDB controversy was all about. The survey found vast majorities of low income voters, who made the majority of voters and those who had no internet access reported lacking awareness about the issue.

Unsurprisingly, the survey also found that 75% of voters did not know what the role of 1MDB was about. This figure was highest among Malay voters (at 81%), those without internet access (87%), those from households below RM3000/month (at 87%) and those who relied upon the mainstream media for their news (at 65%).

However when asked how confident they were with the government's handling of the 1MDB matter, the survey found only 18% of voters reported confidence, while 49% reported lacking confidence and the remaining 33% reported being unsure. The survey found that younger voters were more likely to report lacking confidence in the government's handling of the issue compared to older voters. For example, 57% reported having no confidence compared to only 40% among those 60 years old and above. Lower income voters were likely to say they didn't know compared to those from higher income groups at 50% among household earning less than RM1500 per month reporting uncertainty compared to 21% among those from households earning RM5000 per month or higher.

The survey found that only 33% of voters felt that they were personally affected by the 1MDB issue as compared to 36% who felt they were not affected and 31% who were uncertain. The survey found that those who felt they were affected were more prevalent from the upper income households, ethnic Chinese voters and those from the private sector and business owners.

When asked on who they felt was responsible for the 1MDB matter, a majority 52% of voters said they were unsure, 6% said they did not know while of the remainder, 18% felt the prime minister, 16% reported the federal government, 5% responded that the 1MDB management should be responsible. An additional 3% mentioned other names or institutions should be held accountable.

In our opinion, the lack of traction and awareness of the 1MDB issue among the public stems from the relatively complex nature of the topic as well as the lack of coverage in the mainstream media. Malaysian political history is awash with past instances of alleged financial scandals over which a considerable amount of public funds were committed towards their rehabilitation. Perhaps the country's small tax base (less than 20%) means that the vast

majority of citizens are not invested in the impact of the government's pecuniary conduct hence did not follow and did not feel affected by the issue.

The survey was carried out in collaboration with BFM Radio by the Merdeka Center for Opinion Research between 12th and 27th March 2015. For this survey, 1,011 registered voters comprising 60% Malay, 30% Chinese and 10% 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

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