

Poll: Malay opinion over NEM mixed
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A new survey by independent pollster Merdeka Centre appears to indicate mixed reactions among Malays towards the draft of the New Economic Model which outlines the need to phase out pro-bumiputera affirmative action policies.

On one hand, 67 percent of the Malay respondents want government contracts to be awarded to the best bidder, regardless of the ethnic group the bidder belongs to, but at the same time 69 percent of Malay respondents want bumiputera business quotas to be maintained.

azlanA whopping 79 percent of Malay respondents also want the government to reserve contracts for bumiputera companies and create competition among them.

"At the very basic level, I would conclude the respondents generally want some form of assistance or protection from the government but they could also tolerate or accept some level of competition," said Merdeka Centre director Ibrahim Suffian.

Ibrahim believes that Malay businesses would be looking to see the final NEM document - which will be tabled at the Dewan Rakyat on Thursday along with the 10th Malaysia Plan - to see what are the steps outlined to help them eventually compete in an open market.

The draft of the NEM, Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak's brainchild, has drawn flak from Malay pressure groups because the document mentions that racial quotas must be phased out.

According to the draft, quotas have been applied on less-qualified recipients and this has bred inefficiency and in the interim, should only be applied on 40 percent of the population which constitutes the low-income group.

Economy a major concern

The survey also indicated that bread and butter issues were the biggest concern of respondents.

Of the 1,028 respondents, 22 percent wanted the government to resolve economic issues over other topics such as social issues (14 percent), national unity (13 percent), politics (10 percent), crime (10 percent) and corruption (9 percent).

On the whole, only 47 percent felt that the current economic conditions was favourable.

azlanThe majority of Malay respondents (57 percent) believed that the economy was favourable while 46 percent of Indians expressed the same.

Conversely, only 30 percent of Chinese respondents said the economy was favourable, down from 50 percent last May.

However, 53 percent of respondents as a whole believe that the economy will improve over the next year.

It is a notable mention that only 37 percent of Chinese respondents believe that the

economy will improve while 35 percent believe things will get worse.

Meanwhile, public sentiment on whether the government spends public funds prudently was split down the middle - 46 percent agreed to this, while 45 percent disagreed.

Police shooting

The survey also gauged sentiments concerning the fatal police shooting of teenager Aminulrasyid Amzah, which saw 58 percent of respondents stating that they were dissatisfied with the police handling of the matter.

The highest dissatisfaction was noted among the Chinese (70 percent), followed by Indians (64 percent) and Malays (50 percent).

Aminulrasyid, 14, was shot on April 28 following a high speed car chase in Shah Alam, prompting public outcry over the police's apparent trigger-happy tendencies.

A police corporal has since been charged with causing death by negligence but Aminulrasyid's family are demanding for a royal commission of inquiry into the incident.

The latest Merdeka Centre survey was conducted by telephone between May 6 and 16 through random stratified sampling according to gender, locality, ethnicity and age.

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