

# Ratings down for Dr M and govt

## Survey: Voters worried about economy

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PETALING JAYA: Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad's approval rating as Prime Minister has fallen to 46% from a high of 71% in August last year, according to a poll by Merdeka Centre.

The opinion research firm also found that the Pakatan Harapan government's rating was at 39%, compared to 79% from that same period.

"The decline in ratings is likely attributed to three factors: the condition of the economy as it is perceived by ordinary consumers, the perceived performance of the administration and concerns over Malay rights and privileges, as well as fair treatment of the other races in Malaysia," it said in a statement yesterday.

Merdeka Centre polled 1,204 registered voters from March 5-11 to gauge their perceptions towards the country's economy, leadership and current issues.

The survey noted that respondents who felt that the "country was heading in the wrong direction" increased from 24% in August 2018 to 46% in March.

It added that only 34% of voters believed the country was moving in the right direction.

"This sentiment was more acute among Malay voters, where only 24% felt the country was in the right direction," it said.

It also noted that public satisfaction in the government's management of the economy fell to 40%, compared to 60% previously.

But 67% of the respondents also agreed that the government needed more time to fulfil its election pledges.

The survey found that the economy remained the top concern for voters at 63%,

This sentiment was more acute among Malay voters, where only 24% felt the country was in the right direction.

### Merdeka Centre

followed by race-related issues such as the ratification of International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Icerd).

"When asked to respond from a fixed list of issues, the survey found that concerns over the unfavourable economic condition and inflation or cost of living remained high at 54%, while concerns over racial matters such as preservation of Malay rights and fair treatment of others were significant at 23%," it said.

However, concerns over corruption had declined to 23% from 33% in August 2018.

The survey said the mixed views on government policies such as the abolishment of the death penalty and Year One to Three exams, the lowering of the voting age to 18, the support for a new law to punish those who insult other races and religion, and the tax on sugary drinks, appeared to indicate that the public preferred the status quo.

Hence, it said, more robust and coordinated advocacy efforts were needed to gain public acceptance of such new measures.