



People's report card: 100 days of unity government

The unity government's first 100 days seem to be a mixed bag but many feel it deserves a chance to prove itself within the next five years, according to survey.

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COST of living, prices of goods and inflation remain top issues for the people as we near the 100-day mark since the unity government took the helm of the country.

As a survey titled "100 Days of Administration of Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim as Prime Minister" found, socioeconomic and quality of life issues still top people's list of priorities that the unity government urgently needs to address since the 15th General Election. These include education, job opportunities and health.

And although the unity government holds two thirds of the Dewan Rakyat seats, political stability is the fifth top issue that people think the current PM should focus on.

Conducted by research firm 02 Research Malaysia in collaboration with local media alliance Media in Arms, the online survey polled 35,077 people nationwide from Feb 6 to Feb 16, 2023. It was carried out before the unveiling of the 2023 Budget on Friday, which features various measures to help those struggling with inflation and rising cost of living.

Still, 02 Research head researcher Anis Anwar hopes the survey findings could be a wake-up call for the unity government to further improve their administrative pattern after 100 days.

"They need to be more responsive and move quickly so that the government is seen to be serious about dealing with the

people's issues.

"They also need to involve the people in their programme planning and policymaking process so that action plans and solution steps are bottom-up, and meet the aspirations and needs of the people," says Anis.

National issues and citizen's concerns

Based on three main thrusts - national issues and citizen's concerns; state of country and economic outlook; and scorecard of national leader and institutions - the survey looks at the public sentiments and perceptions on the unity government's performance, plans, programmes and priorities in their first 100 days.

The survey is a part of Media in Arms' *Special Report: 100 Days of Unity Government*.

Media in Arms comprises five mainstream media - Chinese newspaper *Sin Chew Daily*, Malay daily *Sinar Harian*, local news broadcaster *Astro Awani*, Tamil newspaper *Malaysia Nanban* and English language daily *The Star* - which got together in February last year to share resources and collaborate on diversified news content.

Under "national issues and citizen's concerns", as mentioned, socioeconomic issues persist as top concerns and priorities among the respondents.

When asked about how satisfied they are with the unity government's performance from Dec 2022 to Feb 2023 in managing issues that were important to the people during GE15 - namely political stabili-

ty, inter-ethnic relations, education, cost of living/price of goods/inflation, job opportunities and salary/wages - around half of the respondents said they were dissatisfied, while around a quarter said they were satisfied and another quarter answered "moderate".

Similarly, when asked about how they felt the federal government has addressed current important issues such as natural disasters, economic growth of the country, food supply, welfare and health of the people as well as their economic resilience, around half felt that it has not handled them well while the others were almost equally split over whether the unity government has handled them well or were moderate.

The survey found that the five biggest household concerns were inability to afford basic needs (80%); financial savings (61%); being overburdened by debt and loan payments (56%); low wage rates (53%); and education funding for self, children and the rest of their family (52%).

Anis hopes the unity government can take advantage of the survey findings to gauge its level of support and identify its strengths and weaknesses.

"A survey of the first 100 days of a government can be advantageous to the ruling party in several ways," he says.

"First, the survey findings can provide significant information on the public's approval of the government's performance during its first 100 days in power, which can help the ruling party gauge its level of support and determine

whether it is delivering on its campaign promises.

"It can also assist the ruling party in identifying areas where they are functioning well as well as areas where they need to improve. This information can be utilised to improve their policies and strategies, as well as to better respond to the public's needs and concerns."

He stresses that the government needs to face the current reality with the attitude of the people who are critical of the government.

"Although the government has various ministries, the main issues of the people need to be given a more serious focus by the responsible ministries while the work need to be coordinated better across ministries and agencies so that the main challenges facing the people can be properly addressed."

State of country and economic outlook

Around 38% of the people polled said they felt that the country's economic prospects have improved while another 23% said that there has been no change. In contrast, around 39% of respond-



Urgent action wanted: Prices of goods remain a top concern for the people. - The Star

ents believe that Malaysia's economic prospects have worsened.

While 45% respondents believe that the current state of the nation is weak, another 45% believe that the country is moving in the right direction. This shows that many people still feel optimistic with the outlook for the country, says Anis.

However, a deeper look at the findings, based on the ethnic breakdown of the respondents,

shows that there is a gap between the perception and sentiments of peninsular Malays and others.

For one, while over 50% of the respondents from the other ethnic groups view Malaysia's economic prospects and direction positively, 53% of the peninsular Malay respondents feel that our economic prospects have worsened in the last three months, and 43% think that the country is moving in the wrong direction.

Around 56% of the 35,077 respondents who participated in the online survey are peninsular Malays while 44% are Chinese, Indian, Sarawak bumiputra, Sabah bumiputra and others.

There is also a gap between the support and sentiments between the people and the unity government leaders, Anis points out.

"Even though the unity government has two thirds of the seats in the Dewan Rakyat, the evalu-



Anis: The survey findings can help the government determine whether it is delivering on its campaign promises.

tion and positive performance of the government by the people does not reach more than 60% for many things.

"This is because most people are remaining cautious and taking care not to place high expectations to avoid disappointment if those expectations are not met," he explains, noting that this is most apparent among the peninsular Malay respondents who recorded low levels of satisfaction with the performance of the unity government.

The low confidence in the unity government among the peninsular Malay respondents poses the biggest challenge for Anwar's administration, Anis concedes.

"Nevertheless, the majority of the people polled, 45.13%, still feel that the direction of the country is on the right track compared to 30.05% who feel otherwise," he notes.