

Economy, crime top voter concerns, poll shows

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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 11 – Malaysian voters are more concerned about the state of the country's economy, crime and social problems, instead of racial and political issues, the latest survey by independent pollster Merdeka Centre has revealed.

Of the 1,018 respondents surveyed, only six per cent said politics was among their issues of concern, but 34 per cent listed the economy and 19 per cent named crime and social problems.

Slightly over half the respondents, all aged 21 and above, also felt the most important issue that government should tackle is corruption, a hot-button topic that has dominated most of the federal opposition's election campaigns.

In second place is electoral reform, a major demand by polls watchdog Bersih 2.0, with 25 per cent of respondents agreeing that current electoral processes need improvements.

The fight for electoral reform has dominated much of the nation's headlines in the years following Election 2008 as civil society activists and key opposition leaders have long railed against what they claim are irregularities in the current polls process.

Following close at 24 per cent is the voters' demand for affordable housing schemes and other bread and butter issues that affect the pockets of Malaysians in the face of a gloomy global economy.

When asked if they felt the country was headed in the right direction, however, a small majority of 52 per cent offered a positive outlook, citing the improving economy, quality of the current national leadership and peaceful living conditions as their reasons for saying so.

Malays topped the chart as those who appeared most confident in Malaysia and government leaders, with 70 per cent of respondents saying the country was on the right track.

Trailing behind was the Indian community, with 57 per cent of those polled expressing confidence in the country and its outlook for the year ahead.

But only 16 per cent of the Chinese community said the same.

Thirty-four per cent of those polled, however, agreed that Malaysia was heading in the wrong direction, blaming their bleak reading on the rise in living costs, inflation rate, bad quality leaders, corruption and an unfavourable economic condition.

The survey also found that 61 per cent of voters are confident of their prospects in 2013 in comparison with 2012, with most saying that they will focus more on improving their careers and quality of life, and increase attention to their families.

The survey polled a total of 1,018 respondents between December 15 and 28 in all states across the peninsula who were selected through random stratified sampling method along the lines of ethnicity, gender, age and state.

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