

BN, Umno weak in handling the economy after GE13, survey shows
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Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN) have been floundering since the general election last May, with a new survey showing that more Malaysians are describing their performance as "very weak" especially in handling the national economy.

More than half 1,005 respondents polled in a survey commissioned by The Malaysian Insider described BN's performance since the 13th general election as "very weak" while 45% felt its lynchpin party Umno fared as poorly.

The respondents said the ruling coalition had failed to tackle rising cost of living or address economic concerns, displayed negative quality of leadership, and failed to keep election pledges and to tackle corruption.

Only 31% of respondents, who were polled via telephone, felt the BN, which won by a simple majority in the 13th general election, was doing an excellent job, while the rest were unsure or refused to commit.

Once again, Chinese respondents were almost unanimous in their disapproval of BN with Malay respondents slightly in favour of BN.

Both urban and rural voters said they were disappointed with BN's performance with 53% of respondents aged 21 to 40 giving BN the thumbs down. Meanwhile, Umno's performance from the last general election to March this year was described as "very weak" by 45% of the respondents.

Respondents were selected through random stratified sampling methods along the lines of ethnicity, gender and age, and covered all parliamentary constituencies in peninsular Malaysia.

The survey was carried out from March 7 to March 20, 2014 with the selection of respondents being proportional to the population in each parliamentary constituency.

The majority of Chinese respondents said that Umno's performance had been weak while Malays and Indians were evenly split about the Malay party's performance.

The survey did not give a rural-urban ethnic breakdown but said rural folk were split on the average over Umno's performance while urban respondents were dissatisfied with the lynchpin of the BN coalition.

"The top issues which the rakyat are concerned about are cost of living, crime, corruption, national unity and employability," the survey said.

An overwhelming number of respondents (40%), whether from the rural or urban areas, were concerned about the cost of living. Crime was second with 24%, corruption (13%), national unity (11%) and employability (7%).

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's rating was good among the respondents with 42% saying that the Umno president had done an excellent job, while 39% gave him the thumbs down.

The survey also showed that Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi was considered by Malay respondents to be the top performing leader.

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin was second, followed by Defence Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein third.

Zahid was first choice for 15.2%, second choice for 8.1% and third choice for 5.2% of respondents.

Najib was in the fifth position, behind Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin.

Last week, a survey by Merdeka Center revealed that dissatisfaction among Malaysians with Najib increased from 40% in December last year to 44% in March. This came after Putrajaya faced heavy criticism over price hikes, among other issues.

The poll showed that Najib's approval ratings remained unchanged at 52% last month compared with last December.

In December, Najib's approval ratings slid to an all-time low of 52% following the series of painful measures to trim Malaysia's chronic budget deficit.

The price hikes, however, caused public anger, culminating in an anti-price hike rally attended by tens of thousands of Malaysians at Dataran Merdeka in Kuala Lumpur on New Year's Eve. – April 9, 2014.

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