

As nation turns 58, poll shows Malaysians want new government, leadership

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An overwhelming majority of Malaysians polled in a recent survey said they want a change of government and leadership as the nation marks 58 years of independence today, indicating the people's concerns over the current political situation in the country.

The online survey (see results below), conducted by The Malaysian Insider, showed that 67% of those polled wanted a change in government, while 22% wanted better leadership. A total of 9% said they hoped for better economic prospects.

As many as 66% admitted they were worried about the current state of affairs in the country, while 14% were sad. Only 13% of those polled were happy.

Analysts told The Malaysian Insider that this showed that most people were unhappy about the political scandals and would welcome a change of government and leadership.

"A combined 80% of people are either worried for the nation or sad. One would initially think this is a result of both weak economy and political scandals, but nearly 90% actually want change of government or better leadership with less than 10% going for better economic prospects," said political analyst Dr Oh Ei Sun from Singapore's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

"This indicates that people understand that the paramount propelling force for nation-building in this country is politics and not economy, and that politics drives the economy and not the other way around.

"They believe that by resolving the political crisis first and foremost, the economy could then essentially take care of itself," he told The Malaysian Insider.

A total of 8,922 readers participated in the poll, which was conducted on The Malaysian Insider site from August 20 to August 29.

Three questions were posed in the online poll.

The first was, "What is one wish you have for this nation?" The second was, "How do you feel as Malaysia celebrates Merdeka?", and the final question was, "What is one problem you wished would be resolved before Merdeka?"

For the third question, 33% said they wanted the 1Malaysia Development Bhd (1MDB) scandal solved, while 26% said the declining value of the ringgit. Another 24% preferred the increasing racial and religious divide be tackled, 17% of voters were concerned with the curbing of freedom of speech.

Centre of Public Initiative director Dr Lim Teck Ghee said the poll appeared to show that a change in government and leadership – any change – would be welcomed by most Malaysians.

“Malaysians are so fed up with the unresolved scandals and growing racial and religious divide.

“The finding that only 13% of Malaysians are happy as we celebrate our 58th year of independence is especially worrying as it shows the mood of a great majority of our citizens as pessimistic, dissatisfied and discouraged,” Lim said.

The poll results come as tens of thousands of Malaysians gathered in the streets of Kuala Lumpur over the weekend to call for the resignation of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, institutional reforms, clean government, the right to process and measures to save the economy.

Najib has come under fire in recent months over his alleged links to the debt-ridden 1MDB scandal as well as the revelation that RM2.6 billion had been channelled into his personal bank accounts.

The prime minister recently claimed he had been cleared by the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) of corruption over the US\$700 million or RM2.6 billion in his personal accounts, which he reiterated was on behalf of Umno, of which he is president, and not for his personal use.

It was further reported that the money was a donation from a Middle Eastern donor.
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