

Najib seen as better leader than Anwar
Malaysiakini.com
August 15, 2011

INTERVIEW Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak is viewed more favourably as a leader in the public eye compared to Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim.

Pollster Ibrahim Suffian of Merdeka Centre attributed this to effective use of the mainstream media to prop up Najib's image.

The premier's approval rating stood at a strong 69 percent as at last December, he said.

"If you ask me who the public thinks can do a better job, it's more likely they will choose Najib. There is more news about Najib doing things and a lot of the news is very positive.

"So they have a more positive view of Najib as opposed to Anwar. (Perceptions of Anwar) in the mainstream media are burdened by one legal predicament after another. People are accusing him of this and that on an almost daily basis."

Ibrahim explained that, even though the Internet community - such as the anti-Najib Facebook page - is largely anti-establishment, the fact remains that a large part of the population does not have alternative sources of information.

"If you are talking from the public stand-point, I think the public do not have enough info on what Anwar is doing to decide. (This is) partly because only about 40 percent of the public have access to alternative news, much lower than Internet access.

"Not everyone who goes on the Internet goes to portals and read news. So there is an imbalance on how the public can assess leaders."

However, Suffian conceded that approval ratings do not always translate into votes.

"It merely reflects the fact that many people, at least these two-thirds, agree with what the prime minister is saying or trying to do.

(They are) not necessarily agreeing with his political choice (and may not) end up giving their vote to him. The votes that he will gain will be perceptively less than his approval rating."

Cultural influences

Ibrahim also pointed out the cultural challenges in trying to gauge support for leaders, and which may lead to inflated numbers in approval ratings.

"...We know that respondents are less likely to say something that is socially undesirable, for example, saying something bad about a leader. So those in power in the ruling party tend to have an exaggeratedly high number.

"Leaders in the opposition will have a lower number. (This) stems from many reasons, for example, simply a lack of awareness or sometimes due to fear (to answer honestly) in the political aspect of polling.

"In terms of who will be better, a lot of things will change when we go closer to an election campaign period. During campaigning, things become intensified, a lot of disadvantages of the opposition will begin to narrow.

"Then maybe you will see it closely reflect the political situation - only slightly in favour of Najib. If one considers (Sabah and Sarawak) as well, (the) opposition (may not be) far behind."

Copyright © 1999-2007 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
<http://www.malysiakini.com/news/173012>