

Up to Najib to call snap election, says ex-PM
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Former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak can consider calling an early general election if it is true that his approval rating has soared to 72 per cent.

"Alhamdulillah (praise be to God) if he has received (a rating of) 72 per cent," he said, adding that it would be good to know who actually conducted the survey.

A poll conducted by the opinion research firm, Merdeka Centre, between May 6 and 16 showed that Najib's approval rating was 72 per cent, up from 69 per cent in April.

Dr Mahathir said it would have to be left to the government to decide whether to call the next general election earlier than 2013, when it is due, based on the poll by the Merdeka Centre.

He said that when he had led the Barisan Nasional (BN) to an election victory to secure a two-third majority in Parliament, his popularity rating was only 60 per cent.

"But if it is 72 per cent, we hope to be able to win more than a two-third majority. Perhaps, you can call the elections now!" he told reporters after having addressed a gathering of the Gerakan Kebangkitan Rakyat (Gertak) or People's Awareness Movement at the stadium in Kuala Terengganu.

The Merdeka Centre had conducted the poll on a sample size of 1,028 Malaysians, 47 per cent of whom were unemployed, and interviewed them over the telephone.

The poll showed the highest approval rating among the Indians (80 per cent) followed by the Malays (77 per cent) and the Chinese (58 per cent).

Dr Mahathir, when asked for his comments on the 10th Malaysia Plan (10MP) which was tabled in parliament last week, said it had allayed the fear of Malays that their interests would be ignored in the New Economic Model (NEM).

"I have yet to scrutinise the 10MP, but it looks like the problems of the Malays will be attended to by the government.

"This is because the NEM has looked into the criticisms from the Malays, not from the ruling parties but from the Malay non-governmental organisations.

"I believe these criticisms have been taken into account in the 10MP," he said.

Terengganu Menteri Besar Ahmad Said and Gertak chairperson Razali Idris were also present at the gathering, which was attended by some 1,000 representatives of non-governmental organisations.

- Bernama

