

**Pak Lah more popular than Najib**  
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A nationwide survey tracking the popularity of prime minister-in-waiting Najib Abdul Razak found that support for him among Malaysians has plunged to 41%.

The survey by polling group Merdeka Center - conducted over a one-week period between Dec 26 and Jan 2 - showed that Najib's popularity dropped two percentage points since the poll was last taken in late October.

According to Merdeka Center, Najib's popularity reached a high of 55% in April 2007 but saw a dramatic fall in June last year in the wake of the 40% hike in petrol prices to a low of 34%.

It crept up to 43% before falling again in the latest opinion poll. The survey also revealed that outgoing Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, with a 46% approval rating, was more popular than Najib.

More troubling for Najib was an earlier Merdeka Center survey which found that the premier-in waiting trailed Opposition Leader Anwar Ibrahim 34% to 40% on who can make a better prime minister.

Najib's popularity is highest among Malay Malaysians (57%) but low among non-Malays - Chinese (18%) and Indians (28%).

**Low public confidence for MACC and JAC**

Meanwhile, the survey found that Malaysians have little confidence for the newly-minted Malaysia Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) and Judicial Appointments Commission (JAC), with both scoring an approval rating of 43%.

The survey also found that the top two concerns among Malaysians were the ailing economy (43%) and racial problems (17%).

"The survey reveals that a plurality of voters were concerned over economic related issues comprising 22% who cited 'unfavourable economic conditions', 17% citing 'rising cost of living' and 4% who cited 'unemployment', respectively, as the most important issue or problem in the country today," said Ibrahim Suffian of Merdeka Centre.

"These concerns were followed by 17% who cited ethnic-related worries such as 'racial inequality' (9%), 'worsening ethnic relations' (6%) and 'lack of unity among Malaysians' (2%)."

He said that the third most quoted response are government-related with 9% citing 'corruption' and 1% citing 'ineffective/unconcerned government'.

**Backing for English policy in schools**

The survey (see below) also revealed some support for the government's policy in the teaching of science and mathematics in English in primary and secondary schools.

Overall, 57% of Malaysians back the policy with the support highest among Indian Malaysians (86%) while it is less emphatic among the Malays (55%).

The Chinese, however, were split on the issue with 51% giving the policy the thumbs up.

For MCA, the verdict from Malaysian voters is clear - 39% of respondents said that they expected the party "to pressure the government to treat Malaysians fairly irrespective of race."

A total of 1,018 respondents took part in the latest survey comprising registered voters aged 21 and above.

The respondents, all randomly selected, were interviewed via telephone, and the results have a margin of error of 3.1%.

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