

Reject extremism, says Soi Lek
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By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 29 — In his twin messages for Hari Raya Aidilfitri and National Day, MCA president Datuk Seri Dr Chua Soi Lek called on Malaysians today to embrace moderation and reject extremist groups that exploit politics, to keep the country ahead of the competition.

The former health minister said Malaysia was culture-rich, but noted the country had been beset with issues laden with religious and political connotations the past eight months as he reminded the public not to be swayed by "elements of distrust which are out to create mischief and anarchy".

"Defiance of the law is an attempt to test the very fabric of peace and to provoke hostility. There can be no other explanation for such action," Dr Chua (picture) said.

He highlighted that Malaysia had created the unsavoury impression of having "first-class infrastructure but third-class mentality" and urged for a "thinking revolution" to be set up to inspire its citizens to be better than its neighbours.

"We do not want our foreign direct investments to be affected by some mob rule culture in the country. Investors will stay away," he said in his statement.

"We must continue to showcase the true colours of 1 Malaysia to the world instead of shaming or smearing our own country," he added, stressing that there were more pressing issues at stake.

Dr Chua's statements come on the heels of the latest poll by independent research house Merdeka Center on public perception of the Najib administration following last month's controversial rally by electoral reform group Bersih 2.0.

The survey results released today showed over two-thirds of Malaysians agreeing with the demands mooted by Bersih 2.0 while close to half disagreed with the Najib administration's harsh reaction to the July 9 rally in the capital city that saw nearly 1,600 people arrested, out of an estimated 50,000 turnout.

The survey also revealed Datuk Seri Najib Razak's approval rating plunging to 59 per cent, the lowest point since last May when he scored 65 per cent, fuelled by rising concerns over the surge in living costs and his government's handling of the tumultuous Bersih 2.0 rally.

Najib is expected to call for polls within the next few months and with Hari Raya celebrations in full swing, politicians across the divide have been in a race to woo Malay voter support.

The prime minister recently signalled to his Cabinet that the next general election is near, telling them that he intends to hit the ground weekly from Friday to Sunday after the Hari Raya break to meet people and assess the political landscape.

He has also been focusing on the economy, doling out bonuses and cash to government servants, Felda settlers and the poor while talking up the investment inflows into the

country through the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) under the New Economic Model (NEM) in what is seen as an attempt to convince fence-sitters to vote for BN.

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