

Najib's popularity dip shows shift to Pakatan, says Anwar
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SHAH ALAM, Aug 30 — The drop in Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's approval rating indicates that voters are moving towards Pakatan Rakyat (PR), Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim said today.

Anwar (second from left) at the open house of Khalid (second right): "Rural support remains elusive." — Choo Choy May pic
The opposition leader, however, pointed out that rural support remained elusive due to "excessive propaganda of the government."

"(But) I'm optimistic that given the resolve of Pakatan to work harder to explain the issues and see(ing) the performance of states like Selangor, Penang, Kedah, Kelantan, I believe people will choose Pakatan," Anwar told reporters today at Selangor Mentri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim's open house.

A survey by pollster Merdeka Center released yesterday found that 59 per cent of Malaysians approved of Najib's leadership, down six points in the last three months and 13 points lower than his high of 72 per cent in May last year.

Respondents said they were most troubled by the surge in inflation — which hit a two-year high of 3.5 per cent in June — and the government's heavily-criticised handling of the July 9 Bersih rally.

Barisan Nasional (BN) lawmakers have showed little concern that Najib seemed to be steadily losing popular support, pointing out that critics were likely more concerned with racial and religious tensions, rather than the rising cost of living.

PR leaders, however, have warned that the PM's popularity may dive further if he failed to improve the electoral system immediately.

Najib recently introduced a bipartisan parliamentary select committee (PSC) on electoral reform, but said that the timing of federal polls would not depend on the panel's proceedings.

His refusal to guarantee electoral reforms before calling general elections - which are speculated to be held within the next few months - has sparked criticism that the panel was merely an insincere public relations exercise.

Anwar also said today that Najib's popularity drop showed that people could still make "objective" assessments, despite "all the resources at (the) disposal of the Najib administration and the massive propaganda."

"I'm fully convinced that if there's a free flow of information, (if) people have access to information, I believe the rakyat will choose the alternative Pakatan Rakyat," said the PKR de facto leader.

One of electoral reform movement Bersih 2.0's demands is granting all political parties free and fair access to the media.

Selangor Umno information chief Abdul Shukor Idrus claimed recently that BN would recapture Selangor with a 20-seat majority by focusing on rural and suburban seats, saying that the electorate there had less access to the internet, social media tools and the alternative media.

He has also said that certain national issues often played up by PR leaders would only affect Selangor's more urban electorate, particularly those living in constituencies within the city where PR's influence is deemed the strongest.

But PAS deputy president Mohamad Sabu has expressed confidence in making inroads in Felda plantations, which are traditionally seen as BN's vote bank, citing PAS's championing of settlers' rights.

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