

**Najib's rating will slip further without polls reform, says Pakatan
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By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 30 — Pakatan Rakyat (PR) leaders have predicted that Datuk Seri Najib Razak's steady decline in public support may come to a head in the next general election if he fails to introduce immediate reforms to the electoral system.

While they agreed the dip reported by Merdeka Center's latest survey yesterday was unsurprising, the leaders chose to remain cautious over the implications, saying the numbers may not necessarily reflect a positive swing towards the federal opposition.

Lim said the PM has been desperately trying to regain lost ground. The independent pollster's survey revealed that Najib's approval rating hit its lowest point since last May at 59 per cent, fuelled by rising concerns over the surge in living costs and his government's handling of the tumultuous July 9 Bersih 2.0 rally.

DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang said without immediate electoral reforms, Najib's administration may suffer a demise come the 13th general election, which is speculated to be called within the next few months.

"The results are in tandem with the general opinion that things have not been good for Najib, what with the price increases and the mishandling of Bersih 2.0.

"He has obviously been desperately trying to regain lost ground... introducing the parliamentary select committee (PSC) for electoral reforms, the Election Commission (EC) mulling allowing all Malaysians abroad to vote and warming up to the use of indelible ink... but whether these changes will be in time for the next polls, it remains to be seen," he told The Malaysian Insider.

PAS central working committee member Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad said Najib had completely lost his window of opportunity to shore up voter support, saying his handling of recent events had merely contributed to the prime minister's loss in popularity.

Dzulkefly said the PM has a penchant for flip-flopping. He agreed with Lim that Najib must hold true to the purpose of forming the PSC by introducing reforms in time for the coming polls.

"The PSC now seems more political and Najib does not have the political will to guarantee that it will take effect before the dissolution of Parliament. He has shot himself in his own foot, yes, and reaffirmed his penchant for flip-flopping and lack of will to reform," he said.

PR leaders also claimed Najib's purportedly lethargic attempt to reform the election system stemmed from the leader's loss of confidence from among his own men in Umno, indicating that his support was not only weak in public but within his own party.

"Najib is really ending up like his predecessors, reviving this legacy of lost opportunities, so it is not at all surprising that his rating has gone down. But the longer he waits, the more adverse and harmful it will be for him," said Dzulkefly.

PKR leaders Chua Tian Chang and Nik Nazmi Nik Ahmad expressed caution that the

Merdeka Center survey results may panic Umno and Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders into employing more underhanded tactics to ensure a win in the coming polls.

"I think he definitely mishandled Bersih but his approval rating has very little to do with the elections. My concern now is this — Najib is going to read this and there will be more fraud in the polls. Umno will read it and if they plan to face this, they may use massive cheating to win," Chua told The Malaysian Insider.

Nik Nazmi urged the Najib administration to take the survey results as a lesson. Nik Nazmi agreed with the possibility but urged the administration to take the survey results as a lesson and use it to introduce reforms before the coming polls.

He said the PSC may merely be "cosmetic", claiming that Najib would likely end up succumbing to internal pressures from his party detractors by failing to follow through with his pledges.

"He (Najib) spoke about the PSC to ensure that the elections are credible but now the Umno warlords led by (Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri) Muhyiddin (Yassin) are pressuring him, so next he says that he call for polls before the PSC concludes its work. But this is an oxymoron — the life of the committee depends on the life of Parliament," he said.

Najib, he added, is too "cautious" a leader unlike Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, resulting in the former's constant reversal of policy decisions.

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