

**Merdeka Center says Najib approval rating still at 'comfortable' level**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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**By Clara Chooi**

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 3 — Independent pollster Merdeka Center today defended its latest survey on Datuk Seri Najib Razak's approval rating, saying 59 per cent is a "comfortable" figure considering the country's present economic condition.

Its director Ibrahim Suffian said it would be "unreasonable" to expect a higher rating amid the surging inflation rate and incessant influx of socio-economic issues currently plaguing Malaysians.

Merdeka Centre's latest survey saw the prime minister's approval rating slide to its lowest point since last May. — file pic

"In general, the survey results showing satisfaction towards the PM at 59 per cent is a position that is still considered positive and comfortable.

"This is because voter sentiment changes the most when a big incident occurs, one that earns wide media coverage," he said in an email statement here, likely referring to the tumultuous July 9 Bersih 2.0 rally.

Merdeka Center's latest survey saw the prime minister's approval rating slide to its lowest point since last May's high of 79 per cent, fuelled by rising concerns over the surge in living costs and his government's handling of the July 9 Bersih 2.0 rally.

Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers basked in the aftermath of the results, claiming it indicated a clear voter swing towards the federal opposition, while Barisan Nasional (BN) leaders chose to stay indignant, saying the poll may not have been an accurate reflection of voter sentiment.

Ibrahim disputed criticisms of Merdeka Center's sampling methods and survey accuracy, pointing out that the same system had been employed last year when Najib's rating hit a high of 72 per cent in May.

"We understand the political need in the statements made. But the survey results do not mirror anything else apart from the people's sentiment towards the subject matter while the survey is being carried out.

"What should be taken away from this is what measures should be taken to ensure the situation changes ... such as, improving the quality of public service," he said.

The survey, released last week, involved respondents aged 21 and above across the peninsula who were selected through a random stratified sampling method along the lines of ethnicity, gender, age and state of residency. Of the 1,027 polled, 59 per cent were Malays, 32 per cent Chinese and nine per cent Indians.

"The accuracy of the study is actually based on how far the sample represents the people and not on the number of respondents. That is why we were very careful to ensure that the respondents we interviewed were representative of the voter population as well as take into

consideration the limitations of conducting phone interviews," said Ibrahim.

He added that the same method has been used since 2003 to gauge voter sentiment and has since produced reasonably accurate results.

A similar survey in 2006, he pointed out, had shown a significant swing in Chinese voter support towards the federal opposition as well as voter sentiment before the Election 2008 tsunami.

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