

Dr M pins Najib's ratings slid on Bersih rally handling
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By G. Manimaran

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 9 — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's recent approval ratings decline was due to his administration's handling of the July 9 Bersih rally, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed has said.

The former prime minister agreed with the findings of Merdeka Center's latest survey, which saw Najib's approval rating slide to its lowest point of 59 per cent since last May's high of 79 per cent.

Merdeka Center had then concluded that the ratings drop was fuelled by rising concerns over the surge in living costs and Putrajaya's handling of Bersih 2.0.

Dr Mahathir told Astro Awani in an interview aired today that the government's image was badly affected due to the strict measures taken by authorities in maintaining public order on July 9.

He pointed out that Putrajaya had acted wrongly by banning people from wearing yellow shirts.

"This has been blamed on (Prime Minister) Datuk Seri Najib but I do not know what Datuk Seri (Najib) did by ordering that people could not wear yellow shirts.

"I do not think he would tell the police not to allow yellow shirts. But the fact is that those who wore yellow shirts were seen as enemies. This is a move by the Malaysian government and that gave a bad image to the government," the country's longest-serving prime minister said.

Pakatan Rakyat (PR) lawmakers have basked in the aftermath of the survey 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

The survey involved respondents aged 21 and above across the peninsula who were selected through random stratified sampling 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.

Dr Mahathir said that as a result of the rally, the Bersih 2.0 organisers had succeeded in what he called their objective of attacking the government's image and Najib's leadership.

"I feel that Bersih succeeded in achieving its mission to discredit the government's image. They knew that if they did a demonstration, the government would place teams to prevent it. Because of this, the government's image is affected because of its actions such as banning people from wearing yellow shirts and so on," Dr Mahathir added.

When asked to comment on his own daughter's (Datuk Seri Marina Mahathir) involvement

in the rally, the former PM said that he respected her freedom to do what she wanted.

"I did not say my daughter had to follow me. They can think for themselves. Alhamdulillah, she joined but she was unharmed," he added.

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