

Muhyiddin rubbishes Anwar's claim of voter swing to Pakatan
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By Debra Chong

PUTRAJAYA, Aug 30 — Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin poured cold water on Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's claim today that the prime minister's sliding popularity based on a recent poll signified a voter shift to Pakatan Rakyat (PR).

He also played down the survey from independent pollster Merdeka Center, saying the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) government did not take the survey results as "too serious" because the findings depended largely on its sample size.

Merdeka Center yesterday released the results of its survey, which showed a six-point dip in the approval rating of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak; from 65 per cent in May to 59 per cent.

PKR adviser Anwar appeared delighted with the latest rating, saying the indicated drop in support for Najib showed voters were moving towards the opposition PR pact.

"That's not necessarily true," Muhyiddin said, responding to Anwar's remark made earlier today at the Hari Raya Aidilfitri open house of Selangor Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalid Ibrahim.

Muhyiddin, who is BN deputy president, was quick to highlight that his political rival had his own situation to deal with, though he did not elaborate.

The vocal Anwar, however, appears to have been distracted in the past few months and has been keeping a much lower profile as he turns his attention to his ongoing Sodomy II trial, which is to resume on September 19.

"I think Datuk Seri Anwar has also got his own situation," Muhyiddin said at Najib's open house here on the first day of the Muslim holiday.

"What's important is not the survey, but what we do from now on."

He assured that the BN leadership was on the ball with various issues, in particular the rising living costs that troubled the populace.

"I am chairing the NKRA (National Key Result Area) to deal with the rising costs of goods and services," the DPM said, and added that it was a global issue that was of great concern to Malaysians.

He added that the BN federal government was also giving top priority to issues such as education.

Muhyiddin, who is also Education Minister, said the government would make public its decisions "from time to time".

The comment of the country's No. 2 leader ties in with the analysis from Anwar's political allies, who chose to remain cautious over the implications of the Merdeka Center polls, saying the numbers may not necessarily reflect a positive swing towards the federal opposition.

However, they pointed out that the decline in Najib's popular support might come to a head in the next general election if he failed to introduce immediate reforms to the electoral system.

Malaysia's political parties have been ramping up efforts to win over fence-sitters in anticipation of national elections expected to be called by the end of the year.

Najib's mandate, however, ends only in March 2013

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