

CM's ratings take a dive, Najib's remain high among Sabah voters
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 5 — Voters in Sabah remained happy with Datuk Seri Najib Razak's performance as prime minister, but Chief Minister Datuk Musa Aman's ratings fell sharply, a recent poll by Merdeka Center showed.

Najib's ratings remained stable at 75 per cent, but Musa's fell from 60 per cent in November 2009 to 45 per cent in September, suggesting the ruling Barisan Nasional (BN) will be faced with some hurdles in its stronghold ahead of elections soon.

A majority of voters surveyed — 57 per cent — also reported dissatisfaction with Sabah's economic performance.

The independent research house said that voter satisfaction for the state government remained in positive territory at 56 per cent but also reflected a six per cent decline from 62 per cent in November 2009.

But Musa's falling popularity will be cause for concern, with Merdeka Center saying its survey also showed that his declining ratings were most marked among Muslim-Bumiputera voters who are the backbone of the state's Umno support.

Among Muslim-Bumiputeras, Musa's ratings have fallen from 72 per cent in November 2009 to 51 per cent last month.

Voter satisfaction for Najib remains high, with his 75 per cent favourability response just short of the 77 per cent he recorded in November 2009.

The result could mean that the BN machinery will have to rely on the Umno president's popularity to win back a majority of the seats in the state.

Sabah and Sarawak are crucial frontline states which both BN and the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) will have to win in order to take Putrajaya in the next general election.

In Election 2008, BN lost the popular vote in Peninsular Malaysia and analysts say the sentiment remains largely the same in the months leading up to the next elections.

BN will be keen on retaining the Sabah and Sarawak vote as its fixed deposit as it faces what is the most keenly contested elections in the country's recent history.

"In our view, the marked difference in voter perceptions towards key political leadership and the state government reflected a 'Sabah-centric' sentiment exhibited by voters. It also indicates that voters had different expectations on political leadership at various levels," Merdeka Center said in a press release accompanying the release of its survey results.

In the first part of the survey released earlier this week, the Merdeka Center also found that only 54 per cent of voters polled last September felt the state was heading in the right direction compared to 66 per cent in November 2009.

The top five reasons for the drop include the issue of illegal immigrants, dissatisfaction with political leadership, the high cost of living, and “the perception” that Sabah was still “lagging” behind in economic development and infrastructure.

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