

Najib says markets will fall if he loses polls
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KUALA LUMPUR, April 17 – Stocks and the ringgit will plunge if Barisan Nasional (BN) loses next month's election, Datuk Seri Najib Razak said today in an interview with Bloomberg published today.

But he said he would abide by the vote even his BN loses.

"It's better for us to manage change, rather than change that is unleashed in an uncontrolled manner," Najib, 59, said.

"In the countries that have been involved in the so-called Arab Spring, many people are calling it the Arab Winter now."

Najib, who is facing voters as leader for the first time, is under pressure to produce a better result than the last election in 2008, when the ruling BN coalition had its closest win since independence from Britain in 1957, according to the Bloomberg report.

Najib said he would abide by the outcome if the opposition Pakatan Rakyat (PR) wins the elections.

"We are a strong believer in the democratic process and it's the will of the people that decides," he said.

"Whatever the outcome, we have to respect the choice of the people."

"The market, the currency, would take a very sharp decline if the opposition wins," Najib (picture) said.

Prime Minister Najib's approval rating slipped to 61 per cent in February, the lowest level since August 2011, from 63 per cent in December, according to the Merdeka Center's survey. His government had an approval rating of 48 percent.

Earlier today, Bloomberg also reported that companies controlled by billionaires T. Ananda Krishnan and Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar Al-Bukhary have been singled out as being at risk of increased competition and government scrutiny if BN is upset in Election 2013 by PR parties.

Bloomberg noted that companies seen as pro-BN could be targeted if the ruling coalition is defeated on May 5.

The race to control Putrajaya remains tight ahead of nomination day this Saturday, but BN is seen as still having an edge with few observers expecting a defeat for the coalition.

But the Bloomberg report pointed out that Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim's PR pact had pledged in its manifesto to abolish monopolies in industries including pay television, which is dominated by Ananda's Astro Malaysia Holdings Bhd.

Anwar also said in a March 8 interview he would scrutinise government agreements made with Syed Mokhtar, whose DRB-Hicom Bhd (DRB) bought a 32 per cent stake in the national

postal service in 2011.

Ananda controls about 42 per cent of Astro, according to data compiled by Bloomberg.

He also owns shares of Maxis Bhd, the nation's second-largest mobile-phone operator by market value.

Astro and DRB shares have fallen at least four per cent this year, compared with the FTSE Bursa Malaysia KLCI Index (FBMKLCI)'s 1.1 per cent gain, Bloomberg reported.

"Things seem to be shaping up to be a fairly close election," Rahul Bajoria, regional economist for Asia at Barclays Plc, said by phone to Bloomberg from Singapore on April 12.

"There is some market concern generally that the PR coalition has indicated that they will be reviewing contracts."

"When we take over, we're going to call Ananda and say 'reduce the rate,'" Anwar said in the March interview in Kuala Lumpur. "It's very expensive."

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