

BN in slim lead, Najib more popular, poll shows
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By Debra Chong

KUALA LUMPUR, May 2 – Barisan Nasional (BN) is just edging out the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) opposition by a thin one percentage point margin, according to the latest findings by a Sydney-based pollster carried out on the eve of Malaysia's 13th general election.

The poll also found Datuk Seri Najib Razak to be more popular than Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim.

In an online survey of 501 registered voters in Peninsular Malaysia carried out last week, between April 23 and 27, UMR Research found 49 per cent of respondents who revealed they would vote BN, while 48 per cent said they backed the three-party PR pact.

The independent pollster also found Malaysians as a whole wanted change, regardless of which political pact they supported.

According to its research, 44 per cent of Malaysians said the country needs a change of government and believed a PR administration would provide a fresh start to fix the problems Southeast Asia's third-largest economy is currently facing.

Fewer than half or 41 per cent of those polled said the 13-party BN deserved to be re-elected; while 43 per cent said the PR pact were capable of governing the country.

Its findings indicate that support for PR to be much more multicultural with voters equally split between Malays and Chinese with Indians rounding up the numbers at 10 per cent.

By comparison, UMR traced voter support for the BN to be overwhelmingly Malay at a whopping 80 per cent, with Chinese at 13 per cent and Indians a mere seven per cent.

From the survey findings, 34 per cent of voters said the BN was better at championing the Malay Bumiputera rights compared to 17 per cent felt PR to hold the higher ground.

The top issues voters that will be the determining factor for voters on Sunday are at No. 1 spot, government transparency and measures that will cut corruption, followed closely by cost of living pressures and protecting the role of Islam in Malaysia.

"The first two issues favour Pakatan Rakyat while the latter favours Barisan Nasional," Dr Campbell White, UMR's national quantitative director said in a statement that accompanied its survey findings released today.

Forty-two per cent of voters surveyed believed a PR government would be more transparent than a BN administration.

Other issues that have become the talking point in the run-up to Polling Day this Sunday are the coalition's economic management of the country, ensuring the elections will be carried out freely and fairly and defending Malay and Bumiputera rights as enshrined in the Federal Constitution.

PR also pipped the BN in handling elections, cost of living and education.

Voters were equally split when it came to either coalition tackling crime.

The UMR survey showed both coalition leaders to be popular with the public, with BN's Datuk Seri Najib Razak holding a 55 per cent advantage ahead of his rival and former deputy prime, PKR's Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim who snagged a 48 per cent score.

The pollster predicted a high voter turnout on Sunday, with three-quarters of those surveyed saying they are certain to cast their ballots compared to one per cent who said they definitely will not be exercising their democratic right to do so.

Some 13.3 million Malaysians are eligible to vote for the 222 parliamentary and 505 state seats on May 5, touted to be the stiffest challenge the ruling BN has faced in its 55-year hold to power.

UMR described itself as an international non-partisan polling organisation with offices in Sydney, Auckland, Wellington and Berlin with more than twenty years' experience in political polling.

The pollster prides itself as the only organisation that had conducted an opinion poll in the lead up to the Singapore election which accurately predicted the outcome within one per cent.

It gave its Malaysian findings a 4.4 per cent margin of error.

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