

Survey shows more than half of Kajang voters want Anwar as Selangor MB

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Despite criticism against the "Kajang move", more than half of Kajang voters surveyed by a well-known Universiti Malaya think tank, said the by-election should be held to pave the way for PKR de facto leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim to become the next Selangor menteri besar.

About 59% of voters in Kajang interviewed by UM's Centre for Elections and Democracy (UMCEDEL) felt that the Kajang by-election should be held against 17% who were against it while 24% said they were unsure.

The survey also found that voters from all segment of society were in favour of Anwar becoming menteri besar.

The findings challenged the prevailing sentiment being fanned up by critics of the by-election, which was triggered by the sudden resignation of its state assemblyman Lee Chin Cheh, that the polls was a waste of public funds and abuse of the democratic process.

These critics include both pro-Umno newspapers and PKR allies, DAP and PAS.

PKR, and Anwar himself, have admitted that Lee's resignation and the by-election was a carefully laid plan, called the "Kajang move" by its architects, for him to enter the Selangor government. Both the party and Anwar have also strongly suggested that it is to allow him to take over as menteri besar from the popular Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim.

The survey canvassed the opinions of 576 voters in Kajang which is equivalent to more than 10% of the constituency's voter population. It was conducted on February 14 and 15.

UMCEDEL's survey showed that 56% thought the by-election was a good idea, as opposed to 32% who disagreed with it and 12% who were unsure.

UMCEDEL director Datuk Dr Mohammad Redzuan Othman said this was because for many residents, the by-election was an opportunity for them to get their problems aired to national leaders in a way that is different from the usual once-in-five years general election.

"In all, the surveys that we have done in by-elections, and this is our 17th, voters always welcome a by-election. It's an opportunity for their areas to get development projects and for them to solve long-standing problems," said Redzuan, himself a Kajang resident.

This is also illustrated by the finding that 53% of all respondents did not think that the by-election was a waste of money while 35% felt otherwise.

On the other hand, 48% of respondents, as opposed to 39%, felt that the delay in scheduling the by-election would tarnish the Election Commission's reputation.

"This is the longest gap between a seat becoming vacant and the EC setting a date for the by-election. The EC seems to have fully used the 60 day period when it came to this by-election unlike in the past.

"So people are wondering why is it taking so long?" said Redzuan.

By law, a by-election must be called within 60 days of a seat falling vacant.

Also, Kajang voters apparently are unconcerned about the internal disagreements between Pakatan parties over the by-election.

The survey found that only 21% felt that PAS was not cooperating with PKR in the by-election as opposed to 32% who thought the Islamist party was working together with PKR. The remaining 47% were unsure. – February 20, 2014.

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