

Majority of Selangor's Malay voters want PAS to leave Pakatan, survey reveals

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Nearly three out of five Malay voters in Selangor want PAS to leave Pakatan Rakyat (PR), while most Chinese and Indian voters want the coalition to remain intact, according to a joint survey by The Malaysian Insider and Merdeka Center.

The survey, conducted during the peak of the Selangor menteri besar crisis, found that Selangor voters were equally divided between those who wanted the Islamist party to leave or remain in the pact, while one out of six was undecided.

A breakdown of the 808 respondents' ethnicity, however, showed that 58% of Malays wanted PAS to exit the ruling state coalition. But only 29% of Chinese voters and 19% of Indian voters felt the same.

"My belief is that those Malays are combination of supporters of Barisan Nasional, and PAS supporters who believe that they are disadvantaged by being with Pakatan," Merdeka Center executive director Ibrahim Suffian told The Malaysian Insider. However, the pollster said that PAS did not stand to gain by listening to the sentiments of the Selangor Malay electorate, adding that leaving PR would only benefit their political rivals.

"In Selangor, PAS will lose out if it were to go it alone. Almost 50% of the electorate is non-Malays. Although PAS contests in Malay-dominant areas, they are still reliant on non-Malay votes," he said.

The survey ran from August 11 to August 17, had also found a clear ethnic divide when voters were asked if PAS should have supported Tan Sri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim to stay on as MB.

An overwhelming 81% of the Malays polled said PAS should have continued supporting Khalid despite PKR's decision to remove him, as opposed to 21% Chinese and 33% Indians.

Asked what PAS should have done throughout the impasse, 40% of Malays polled said PAS should team up with Selangor Umno to support Khalid, while 31% of them said PAS should support Khalid even if PR were to split over it.

Only 14% of the Malays agreed that PAS should relent and go along with PKR and DAP.

In contrast, 4% of Chinese and 8% of Indians voters said "yes" to an Umno-PAS alliance in Selangor to support Khalid, and 12% of Chinese and 8% of Indian voters agreed that PAS should support Khalid even if PR were to break up.

But 55% and 53% of the Chinese and Indians, respectively, wanted PAS to go along with its allies' decision to replace Khalid with PKR president, Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail.

Asked why the Malays wanted PAS to support Khalid, Ibrahim said one reason was because he was being replaced by a woman.

The survey only 34% of the Malay respondents felt the country was ready for a woman MB in general, as opposed to 83% of Chinese and Indians voters who responded positively to the idea.

"The other thing is, you have a kind of melding of support from Malays who are BN supporters, who want Khalid to stay on. You also have PAS supporters going along with party lines," said Ibrahim.

PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang and the party's influential Shura Council had initially thrown their support behind Khalid to stay on as MB.

But the PAS central committee finally decided on August 17 – the last day of the Merdeka Center survey – to endorse both Dr Wan Azizah and her deputy, Azmin Ali for the post.

Khalid remains MB despite being sacked from PKR as the sultan had consented on August 11 to him staying in office after the Port Klang assemblyman maintained he still commanded the majority support of the state assembly.

But Khalid tendered his resignation on August 26, after PAS declared it no longer supported him. However, the sultan deferred his resignation and told him to stay on until a new MB was appointed.

Sultan Sharafuddin Idris Shah also decreed that each party leader in PR submit more than three names for the Selangor MB position, despite PR having already submitted a letter of support for Dr Wan Azizah, signed by 30 assemblymen.

PKR and DAP decided to stick to their original decision of nominating only Dr Wan Azizah in spite of the sultan's decree, citing convention in 2013 and 2008.

However, PAS submitted both Dr Wan Azizah's and Azmin's names to the palace, in a move that could strain ties between the three allies. – September 4, 2014.

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