

Malaysians want veteran politicians to step down, survey shows
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By Anisah Shukry

One out of two Malaysians wants veteran politicians from both sides of the divide to give up their positions of power and make way for younger leaders, a survey commissioned by The Malaysian Insider has found.

The survey on Malaysia's future leadership by independent pollster Merdeka Center found that 62.6% of the 1,008 respondents agreed that opposition leader Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim should step down and give way for younger leaders to head the party.

Also, 58.3% of the Malaysians polled said DAP parliamentary leader Lim Kit Siang should resign, followed by Umno president Datuk Seri Najib Razak (49.7%), PAS president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang (46.6%) and Umno deputy president Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin (42.5%).

"The general sentiment is that all of them should go and make way for the younger leaders. It's only the hardcore supporters who want these personalities to stay on," Ibrahim Suffian, the director of Merdeka Center, told The Malaysian Insider.

"Most of the younger voters want younger leaders, because the older guys are associated with infighting and criticising, without offering solutions," he said, citing the protracted debate on hudud between DAP and PAS as an example.

The survey revealed that Anwar, now in jail after being convicted for sodomy, was the most unpopular among the Malays, with 71.2% saying they wanted him to go, compared to 50.3% of Chinese and 48.1% of Indian respondents.

Lim was only slightly less popular than Anwar among the Malays, with 68.7% agreeing that he should step down, compared to 45.4% Chinese and 35.3% Indians.

Ibrahim said while Malaysians sympathised with Anwar, they still felt the 67-year-old should step down and give room for younger leaders to bring PKR to greater heights.

"Anwar is a polarising figure because over the years he has been criticised for his actions and been subjected to intense media treatment over a decade. Because of that, many people either love him or hate him," said Ibrahim.

"A lot of people who know and support him are those who participated in the reformasi demonstration years ago."

In contrast, many young voters today did not know Anwar very well, particularly his contributions while in the government, and may not have a sense of political awareness, said Ibrahim.

DAP's Lim, meanwhile, is one of the longest-serving politicians in Malaysia. He was

elected as the party's national organising secretary in 1966, and became a lawmaker in 1969.

The survey found that while more Malaysians wanted Hadi to stay compared to Lim and Anwar, this was largely because he received slightly more support from Barisan Nasional (BN) supporters.

But among Pakatan Rakyat (PR) supporters, 52.5%, 51.3% and 47% wanted Anwar, Hadi and Lim to resign, respectively.

Meanwhile, more than half of Barisan Nasional supporters wanted Najib (56.8%) and Muhyiddin (59.2%) to stay in power, which helped boost their overall figures.

But among the non-Malays, the two were deeply unpopular, with just 10.3% Chinese and 9.8% Indians saying Muhyiddin should stay on, and only 11.9% Chinese and 15.6% Indians wanting Najib to remain in power.

Among the Malays, however, Najib and Muhyiddin were more popular: 41.7% and 49.1% disagreed with the Umno president and deputy president stepping down, respectively.

"Among BN, there is strong loyalty towards the top leaders because they get handouts. In contrast, Pakatan Rakyat leaders can't really afford to give much to their supporters," said Ibrahim.

"But overall, you can see that the electorate are moving beyond politics of personalities and looking at what politicians are delivering: better economic policies, better relations with the people, giving them hope and not fear."

The survey involved 1,008 respondents of voting age, who were interviewed by telephone from January 21-30 and chosen through the random stratified sampling method along the lines of ethnicity, gender, age and parliamentary constituencies.

All parliamentary constituencies were surveyed and the selection of the respondents is proportional with respect to the population. – March 12, 2015.

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