

Poll points to strong win for N. Zealand PM
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WELLINGTON: New Zealand Prime Minister John Key is set to coast to a second term at a general election this month, possibly securing an outright majority in parliament, according to a poll published Wednesday.

The Fairfax Media-Research International poll in the Dominion Post put support for Key's conservative National Party at 52.5 percent, more than double the main opposition Labour Party's 25.9 percent.

If repeated at the November 26 election, that would give National 67 seats in the 122-seat parliament, enough for Key to govern in his own right, without the three minor parties his government now relies on.

The 1,000 voters surveyed for the poll also strongly backed Key as preferred prime minister, giving him a 52.2 percent approval rating compared with 13.5 percent for Labour leader Phil Goff.

New Zealand has not had a majority government since 1996, when it scrapped the first-past-the-post voting system in favour of proportional representation.

Key, a former investment banker, has campaigned on his economic record during the lead-up to the ballot, arguing that the country needs experienced leadership amid turbulence on world markets.

Goff, who served as foreign minister under former Labour prime minister Helen Clark, has accused Key's government of widening the gap between rich and poor.

However, the centre-left Labour leader has struggled to get his message across in a nation still basking in the afterglow of the All Blacks winning the Rugby World Cup on home soil last month.

The opinion poll suggested support for Labour, which secured 34 percent of votes at the last election in 2008, was being eroded by the Greens, who scored 12.6 percent in the survey, compared to 6.7 percent in the 2008 ballot. - AFP

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