

fastFT Mexico

Mexico election 2018: Poll puts Meade in close race against López Obrador

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It's early days and this is a marathon, not a sprint, but José Antonio Meade, the ruling PRI party's expected pick as its candidate in next July's Mexican presidential elections, has enjoyed an early bounce.

According to the first poll published since Mr Meade's resignation as finance minister on Monday to register as candidate, 23.2 per cent of respondents would vote for him if elections were held now. That places him within spitting distance of Andrés Manuel López Obrador, the hard-left frontrunner, who garnered 28.7 per cent, according to the survey by pollsters GCE.

Mr Meade has to be formally selected by the PRI but since he enjoys the support of the president and PRI bastions such as the Confederation of Mexican Workers, there is no doubt that he will be the official candidate.

In its telephone poll of 600 respondents on Monday GCE found, nonetheless, that Mr Meade was a virtual unknown to many voters: 34.3 per cent said they had never heard of him, compared with just 1.8 per cent for Amlo, as the frontrunner and three-times presidential candidate is widely known.

The poll found 29.1 per cent had a favourable opinion of the former finance minister, however – again dwarfed by the 46.8 per cent who like Mr López Obrador.

Mr Meade scored “bad, or very bad” from 23.8 per cent of the respondents however – lower than the 38.5 per cent who did not like Mr López Obrador.

Analysts expect the July 1 vote to be very close and for the PRI to seek to fragment the opposition. Mexico's first-past-the-post system with no second round means the next president could be elected with even less than the 38 per cent which won Enrique Peña Nieto the presidency in 2012.

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