

**Survey: Najib's popularity has dropped**  
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak who has stressed on the importance for political leaders to be popular is now seeing his own appeal fading a little among Malaysians.

After six months since assuming office, the premier's approval rating has dropped by almost 10 percent.

A survey conducted by independent pollster Merdeka Centre showed that the number of Malaysians satisfied with Najib's performance fell to 56 percent from 65 percent in mid-June.

In a statement today, Mederka Centre's Ibrahim Suffian said the survey was conducted among 1,027 voters aged 21 and above between Sept 4 to 14.

As for the racial breakdown, it appears that Najib is most popular among the Indian community with 68 percent of those polled expressing happiness with his leadership.

One of the most important tasks undertaken by the new premier is to regain the support of non-Malays for Barisan Nasional.

In view of this, Najib has dished out numerous goodies for the Indians and Chinese, among them is the Amanah Saham 1Malaysia shares and loans to develop entrepreneurial skills.

He is also the first prime minister since his father Tun Abdul Razak to visit a landmark Hindu shrine in Batu Caves.

However, his feel-good measures seem to have little impact on the Chinese.

Of the three races polled, the premier - who has placed much emphasis on unity and fairness with his 1Malaysia concept - is least fancied by the Chinese (36 percent).

Whereas his approval rating among the Malays stands at 64 percent.

"Overall, the survey found that the number of people dissatisfied with his performance remains about the same at 23 percent compared to 22 percent in June 2009," said Ibrahim.

#### Corruption and crime

Based on follow-up questions, Ibrahim said the survey revealed that the majority of people are satisfied with Najib's efforts to improve the education system, government efficiency and managing the economy.

"But many found the effort in reducing crime and corruption still wanting," he added.

Meanwhile, the survey also found that Malaysians are split over the direction of the country with 34 percent stating that it is heading south while seven percent believe that the captain of the ship is steering her along the right course.

"With respect to issues, the survey found that public concern over the economy had dipped to 21 percent from 23 percent in June, citing it as the most important issue," said Ibrahim.

Najib, who is the country's sixth premier, took over the leadership reins from Abdullah Ahmad Badawi in April.

Since the onset, Najib has been haunted by the murder of Mongolian national Altantunya Shaariibuu, which has left an indelible mark on his reputation.

Despite the premier repeatedly proclaiming his innocence, conspiracy theories abound and the issue remains as the most potent weapon in the opposition's arsenal, especially during elections.

Altantunya's spectre was also invoked during the ongoing campaign for the Bagan Pinang by-election.

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