

Survey: Najib lost Indian, Chinese support after Bersih rally
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KUALA LUMPUR, June 1 — Datuk Seri Najib Razak's approval rating experienced a marked decline among Indian and Chinese voters just weeks after a tumultuous Bersih 3.0 rally, a recent survey has shown.

A Merdeka Center Survey, carried out between May 10 and 18, found that 72 per cent out of Indian voters were satisfied with Najib as prime minister — an eight point drop from February this year.

It also found that Chinese support from the PM had dropped 19 points from a 56 per cent in February. Only 37 per cent from this segment polled now supported Najib.

Malay voter support for Najib, however, experienced a four-point increase, from 74 per cent in February to 79 per cent in May this year.

A total of 1,019 registered voters — 59 per cent Malay, 32 per cent Chinese and 9 per cent Indian — were polled three weeks after the April 28 Bersih rally that took place here.

Both the Barisan Nasional (BN) and Pakatan Rakyat (PR) have gone through great pains to shore up non-Malay voter support ahead of an expected election, which must be called before the middle of next year.

But the findings of the last Merdeka Center suggest that BN's support, especially among the Indian community — traditionally pro-BN — is slipping away.

The racial overtones of the protests against Bersih-co chairman Datuk Ambiga Sreevenasan had even prompted an MIC minister to defend the former Bar Council chief. Human Resources Minister Datuk Seri Dr S. Subramaniam had said Ambiga should be protected and her rights respected despite having views contrary to the government's on electoral reforms.

The survey also found a four-point increase support for the PM among households earning less than RM1,500 a month, rising from 78 per cent in February to 82 per cent last month.

The April 28 Bersih 3.0 rally that saw tens of thousands gather at six different locations before heading to Dataran Merdeka was peaceful until about 2.30pm when Bersih co-chairman Ambiga asked the crowd to disperse.

But her announcement was not heard by most of the crowd who persisted to linger around the historic square, which the courts had already barred to the public over the weekend.

Just before 3pm, some protestors breached the barricade surrounding the landmark, leading police to disperse the crowd with tear gas and water cannons.

Police then continued to pursue rally-goers down several streets amid chaotic scenes which saw violence from both sides over the next four hours.

Several dozen demonstrators have claimed that they were assaulted by groups of over 10

policemen at a time and visual evidence appears to back their claim but police also point to violence from rally-goers who also attacked a police car.

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