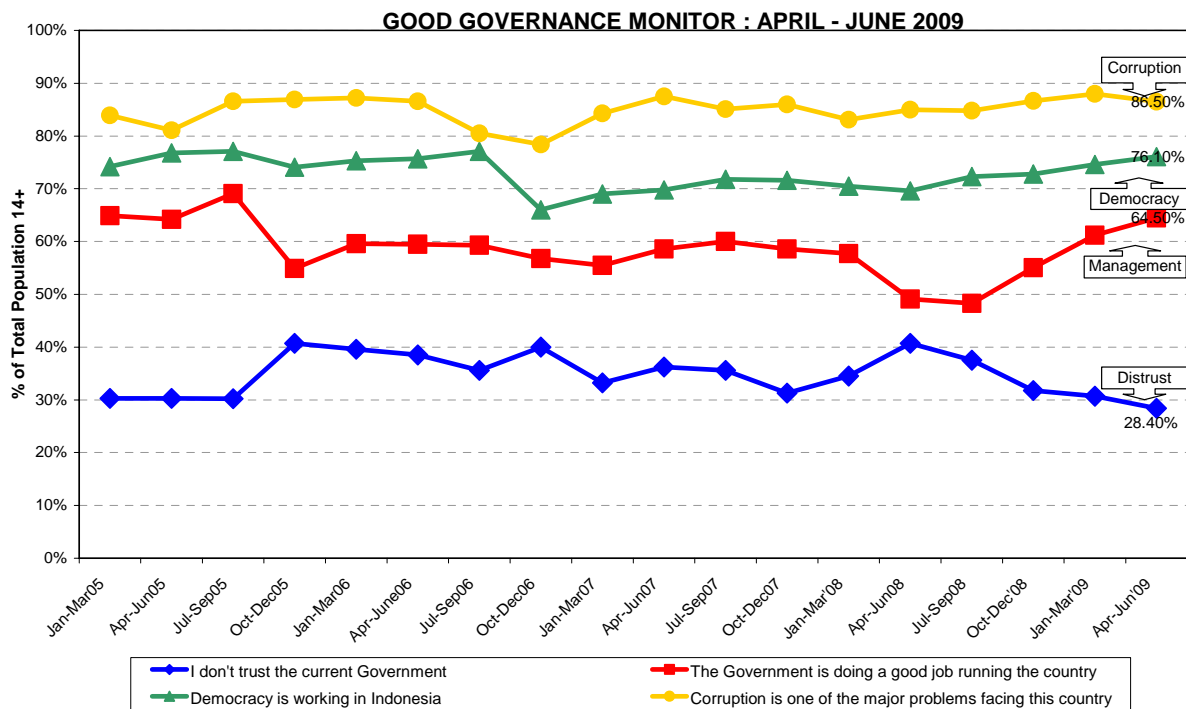


## How will all the political capital get spent?

The election results are officially out, but challenged in court. Two bombs went off in recent weeks, now DNA results of Noordin Top's bloody end has the nation holding its collective breath. But the April-June 2009 update of Roy Morgan Single Source is in hand, with good news from all around the country. According to the people, not just the leadership, the state of the nation is in remarkably good shape. That's a certainty.

Leading up to the election, the signs were almost entirely positive for the incumbent. On the key issue of trust, the SBY government gained further ground in the April-June quarter. "I do not trust the current government" fell by another two points to 28 per cent, lower than the all-time low registered when SBY first swung into power. That sentiment had an obvious impact on "the government is doing a good job running the country" with 65 per cent of the population giving the leadership a thumbs-up. With food and fuel prices stable, lower than the painful heights of 2008, the national mood had been steadily swinging upwards for some time. The trend continued. By these measurements, it would be fair to conclude that Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono is the most popular leader of any democracy anywhere. More popular than Obama and ahead of Rudd, the two nearest contenders.

It would be appropriate at this juncture to remind readers that Roy Morgan Research is not a mouthpiece of any government. We take pride in communicating the views of the people on life itself, across a myriad issues, good news or bad. My own opinion, expressed in the context of the data garnered, is easily deciphired and just as easily ignored.



Those who continue to bash Islam mindlessly ignore the success of democracy in a country that has a predominantly Muslim population, the single-largest in the world. The people of Indonesia have sent the fundamentally religious parties packing one more time, a verdict that the world needs to pay attention to. As at June 30, 76 per cent of the people believed “democracy is working in Indonesia”, up another 2 points from the previous quarter. This combination of moderate Islam and flourishing democracy is a beacon of peace to the peoples of the world, supporters and critics alike. What the country has achieved in a short span of time would be the envy of its primarily Catholic neighbour, The Philippines. Far from perfect, Indonesia’s own brand of secular democracy will need to be nurtured, keeping Pancasila alive, religion and state apart. The people made a choice and opinion leaders need to remain ever vigilant, to thwart majoritarian rule from negatively affecting minorities.

How the new government will spend all its political capital remains to be seen, but the measurement of their choices made will be relentless. “Corruption is one of the major problems affecting this country” also dipped in the April-June quarter, with 86 per cent of the population agreeing. It remains the predominant national concern, an issue that the political leadership has acknowledged yet again. The landslide victory at the poll strengthened the whipping hand, now it’s time for word to be turned into action with even greater alacrity. A complex issue, showcase indictments are not the only way forward even while they serve as major deterrents, as examples. The more arduous task of job creation and better wages are equally important platforms for fighting corruption. On that score, the governments efforts at federal, provincial and local levels are also showing good signs of progress. Unemployment continues to decline, incomes continues to rise, inflation is in the best shape for a decade.

Business leaders, take note: The consumer is not a moron. And the government is watching. It could easily be argued that there is no better combination of economic, political and social factors, anywhere in the world today. Against the backdrop of global gloom, Indonesia is in remarkably good shape. Captains of industry need to take advantage of these circumstances and make their contributions to nation-building. There is profit to be made, if the cards are played right. Many are dealing them well, with proven success. But as always, short-cuts to success are rare indeed. Even those who subscribe to the fictional Gordon Gecko’s motto of “greed is good” can see how over-investment in the high-end property sector is taking its toll today.

If a business or a brand isn’t doing well, it cannot be blamed on the Indonesian consumer or its consumer economy. The business environment in Indonesia could hardly be better.

For more good news from around the country, watch this column in the weeks ahead. These conclusions are based on Roy Morgan Single Source, a syndicated survey with over 25,000 Indonesians 14 years and older interviewed each year. That national database is updated every quarter, capable of acting as a tracker of sharply defined corrective actions that need to be taken to bring about positive change. Almost 90 per cent of the population is covered, from the cities, towns and villages of Indonesia. That is one of the many reasons why the survey is used by more marketers and media agencies than any other.

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