

Brazil's Lula Popularity Still High

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BRASILIA (Reuters) - Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's popularity rose six months into his second term despite growing violence in cities and a series of corruption scandals in national politics, an opinion poll showed on Tuesday.

Brazilians were pleased with the country's strong economic performance, rising wages and social welfare programs, according to a Sensus opinion poll published by the National Transport Confederation.

Lula's personal approval rating rose to 64 percent, its highest rate since February 2005, from 63.7 percent in April,

"The anchors of his popularity are good economic performance and social welfare programs," Sensus Director Ricardo Guedes told a news conference.

Approval of Lula rose despite a welter of corruption allegations against friends and allies. The energy minister quit in May over a kickback scandal and the head of the senate is defending himself against accusations he took bribes.

Lula, a former union leader, has been dubbed the "Teflon President" for bouncing back from an earlier series of graft scandals involving his ruling Workers' Party in 2005 and 2006.

Although Lula was not personally implicated, the opposition used the issue to force last October's presidential election to a second round, which he won easily in the end.

Lula also remained shielded from growing concern over deteriorating public security in major cities. Of those polled, 76.1 percent said violence and crime were "out of control."

Rio de Janeiro and Recife in particular suffer from rampant street crime and bloodshed fueled in part by the illegal drugs trade.

The poll showed that the percentage of people who had a salary increase over the past six months rose to 26.8 percent in June from 20.3 percent in April.

Fewer people are paying attention to an ongoing aviation crisis that has repeatedly caused chaos in passenger flights in recent months, the poll showed.

The survey polled 2000 people between June 18 and 22 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

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