

NCPO brings calm to political arena

After months of protests, mounting fears of violence and political deadlock, the May 22 coup staged by the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) somehow brought some sense of relief and calm to the political landscape.

Despite being undemocratic by nature, the power seizure was welcomed by several sectors of society who saw it as an opportunity to put things in order and pave the way for national reforms.

Shortly after the coup, the military regime led by army chief-turned-prime minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha rolled out a three-phase "road map" for the country and tentative time-frame for implementation. The so-called road map gives the public a glimpse of what is lying ahead under military rule before a return to democracy.

The first stage on the road back to democracy was to establish and maintain peace and order, run the normal operations of the civil service, and deal with urgent economic and social problems such as overdue rice payments, costs of living, narcotics, weapons trafficking, and measures to accelerate disbursement of the 2014 national budget.

The second is to create an environment contributing to national reforms, with the establishment of the National Legislative Assembly (NLA), the National Reform Council (NRC), and the Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC). This phase will take almost up to one year as it involves charter drafting and national reform in all aspects with the expected participation of all sectors of Thai society.

This is planned to pave the way for the third stage in which an election will be staged to restore full democracy under the framework of the new constitution.

ANALYSIS: Six months after the coup, many consider the country to be finding its way out of the darkness, writes **Nattaya Chetchotiros**

The NLA has passed a number of draft laws and is expected to speed up the introduction of 300 laws to allow various reforms to take place over the next year.

The interim government plans to submit at least 100 draft laws to the NLA for consideration.

The NRC has created "a vision for Thailand's future" over the next two decades that includes reducing economic and social disparities, improving education, reforming the political system and ensuring the fair distribution of natural resources.

To do this, it has opened nine channels to be used to collect ideas from the public for reform and charter drafting.

The CDC has been set up and the body is in the process of outlining a new permanent charter. The writing process itself is slated to begin after New Year's Day.

Throughout the past months, Gen Prayut has given emphasis to maintaining peace and order, establishing transparency and good governance. He has a conviction that national reconciliation can be achieved much more easily if the government is efficient, graft-free and answerable to the public.

However, Gen Prayut who is concentrating his efforts on "reconciliation", is being closely watched as to whether he

will send a signal to the NLA when the lawmakers meet to consider an impeachment request against former prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra over her role in the corruption-plagued rice-pledging programme.

Ms Yingluck has so far cooperated with the military junta. The former prime minister recently cancelled her trip to India to join her brother Thaksin Shinawatra in a merit-making ceremony.

"I am trying to do all I can to bring about sustainable reconciliation. Let the lawmakers and those in charge of national reforms do their job. The government is doing its job," he said as the NLA was preparing to proceed with the impeachment request.

The public is closely watching if the 220-member NLA handpicked by the NCPO is up to the task when it handles something politically sensitive like the impeachment motion. Designated to serve as the parliament by the interim charter, the NLA failing to do its job by using reconciliation as an excuse would only undermine its credibility.

The public perception of the NCPO and Gen Prayut has so far been positive since the coup.

According to Krungthep Poll conducted by Bangkok University last week, 62% of 1,115 respondents nationwide said the country is on the road to political reform compared with 34.5% who did not see any difference.

**IF YOU'RE HAPPY
AND YOU KNOW IT...**

A Nida poll asked 1,252 respondents nationwide about whether they are happy or unhappy following the National Council for Peace and Order's policies six months after the coup.

AREAS OF HAPPINESS 

- 55.11%** Return of peace and order
- 14.86%** No happiness
- 7.19%** Social affairs reorganisation
- 5.51%** Fight against corruption
- 4.87%** Increasing farmers' income
- 3.99%** Crime suppression
- 2.64%** Solving economic problems
- 2.24%** Having more freedom
- 2.00%** Reducing the cost of living
- 1.59%** Others

AREAS OF UNHAPPINESS 

- 28.43%** No unhappiness
- 17.17%** Solving economic problems
- 15.34%** Reducing the cost of living
- 13.00%** Increasing farmers' income
- 7.27%** Fight against corruption
- 6.95%** Crime suppression
- 5.27%** Lack of elected government
- 1.36%** Social affairs reorganisation
- 1.04%** Controls on media freedom of expression
- 0.32%** Every policy
- 3.85%** Others

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