

Most Thais believe Article 44 can help reforms succeed

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MOST PEOPLE are confident that special powers under Article 44 of the post-coup interim charter can help Thailand succeed in national reforms, according to the results of an opinion poll released yesterday.

More than 47 per cent of respondents in the poll felt that Article 44 was associated with peace in the country. And just over half of those surveyed in the study said invocation of the controversial clause was helping the country's fight against corruption.

The survey of 1,279 people in all regions of the country was conducted by Bangkok University's Research Centre last week.

As many as 62.6 per cent of respondents said they were confident Thailand's reform efforts would succeed with the help of Article 44, although 72 per cent admitted that their knowledge about the clause was minimal.

More than three-quarters of those surveyed (78 per cent) said powers under Article 44 should be retained even after the next general election.

Of those, 60.7 per cent said such powers should be used only in "situations where the government is unable to control" while 17.7 per cent thought

Article 44 should be invoked only to maintain peace in the country.

However, 19 per cent said the clause should be dumped when the country returns to democracy.

Article 44 empowers Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, in his capacity as head of the National Council for Peace and Order, to issue orders in the name of national reform, with power over other branches of government.

Meanwhile, according to the latest Suan Dusit Poll, most respondents said they had experienced peace in the country under the current government although conflicts and divisions between different groups still exist.

The survey was conducted on 1,189 people in all regions of the country between last Monday and Friday.

Asked about positive changes they saw after Prayut's regime took power, most pointed to national peace, anti-corruption efforts and moves towards reconciliation.

But they also flagged negative issues such as restriction of rights and liberties. In terms of the economy, most saw positive changes in the government's efforts to tackle economic problems and help the poor. But they also experienced a rising cost of living and higher personal debts.