

# NCPO should lift ban on political activities, new survey shows

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THE National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) should lift its ban on political activities and allow parties to resume working, most respondents said in a Bangkok Poll survey.

The poll, conducted on 1,194 people from across the country and released yesterday, found that 61.2 per cent of the respondents would like the junta to ease the ban on political gatherings.

Less than one-third of respondents, or around 29 per cent, thought that the strict ban should remain, even though the organic law on political parties has already been enacted, and 9 per cent said they were not sure.

Although the majority thought that the political suppression should end, more than half of the respondents – 53 per cent – still thought there was very little chance that politics would be better after that. The rest were more optimistic and thought there was a high chance that politics would improve.

Some concerns over political turmoil also remain. Almost 55 per cent of the people surveyed said they were afraid political conflict could recur.

Just over 52 per cent were concerned about political division and 40.5 per cent were worried about street demonstrations and political unrest.

The surveyed people also had concerns for democracy and about the postponement of the election.

Almost two-thirds, or 63.5 per cent, said that unless the political ban was lifted, the country would never return to democracy, while 39.3 per cent anticipated that the promised election would be delayed.

One-fifth, or 20.4 per cent, were worried for the political parties, saying that they may not have enough time to prepare for the election while the ban remained.

And almost 10 per cent said they were afraid some of the major parties would be dissolved.

Asked what they thought would happen if the political restrictions persisted, 42.8 per cent said maybe there would be new faces in politics as well as new parties, while 29.3 per cent said the election should be held off until everyone was ready.

More than one fifth, or 21.8 per cent, said the NCPO should stay on and run the country, while 6.1 per cent said the political parties should be reset to square one.