

# Public nod for martial law: survey

POLL SHOWS 70 PER CENT WANT RESTRICTIONS  
IN PLACE AS TENSIONS HAVE NOT DISSIPATED;  
PM PRAYUT WINS PRAISE FOR HIS LEADERSHIP

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MOST THAIS appear to believe that given the country's current situation martial law needs to be continued, according to the latest public opinion survey.

Of the 1,120 people surveyed by Bangkok University Research Centre's Bangkok Poll, about 70 per cent of respondents insisted that martial law was necessary at the moment.

About 39 per cent of respondents said martial law was needed to prevent political rallies while 31 per cent said martial law must stay amid threats of bomb blasts and unrest.

Last week, two bomb blasts took place near Siam Paragon shopping mall in Bangkok, slightly injuring two victims but spreading concern across Thailand.

The Bangkok Poll found that just

22 per cent felt martial law was not necessary anymore. These respondents believed the enforcement of martial law made Thailand look bad in the eyes of foreigners and that martial law affected tourism.

The survey was conducted to gauge people's views about how Thailand was doing in the eight months under the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO).

At the height of the country's political crisis, the NCPO staged a military coup last May.

Of people covered by the Bangkok Poll, 46 per cent felt martial law had been crucial in returning peace to the country during the past eight months. Some 35 per cent said martial law had a role to play while 16.5 per cent felt martial law did not have any impact on the country's peace.

Asked whether they still felt the heat of political rallies or conflicts over

different political ideologies in their hometown, only 9.8 per cent felt the situation had not eased at all.

Some 38 per cent felt the heat was hardly felt these days, while 51 per cent said such tensions still existed to some extent.

In addition, as many as 71 per cent of the respondents felt Thailand's situation had improved under the leadership of Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha. Only 19.6 per cent said the situation was the same while 7 per cent felt the situation had worsened.

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Of those polled, 50.7 per cent felt the small blasts near Siam Paragon last week were aimed at defying martial law.

In the wake of the blasts, the police presence in the area has increased. More patrols are conducted with help from sniffer dogs.

"We are also handing out our name cards to let people know whom to contact in the event of emergencies," Patrol and Special Operations Division's commander Pol Maj-General Panuwat Lakboon said.

Following the Siam Paragon explosions, police are also using 21 patrol vehicles, in addition to patrolmen on foot, for surveillance of areas in Bangkok frequented by tourists at night, including red-light districts of the capital, said Pol Lt-Colonel Torsak Sukwimon, a senior superintendent of the Crime Suppression Division.