

RESPONDENTS DON'T CARE WHO PICKS PM

Polls show support for Section 44

» Most Thai people don't care how a prime minister comes to power as long as they deliver, a Suan Dusit Rajabhat University poll shows.

And another survey by Bangkok Poll revealed a majority of people believe the powerful Section 44 of the interim charter "remains a necessary tool".

About 55% of Suan Dusit poll respondents said they do not mind whether or not a prime minister is nominated by political parties, compared with 32.6% of those insisting a government leader should be nominated by a political party.

However, 12.3% said they preferred an "outsider" to serve as prime minister and that political parties should take a break to make way for changes. This group believed "individuals with knowledge" should be given a chance to work.

The poll, which surveyed 1,167 respondents, showed honesty, integrity and putting national interests before others are the most important qualifications of a good prime minister.

More than a third (37.6%) said they are satisfied with the current political environment in which corruption problems are being addressed. And 33.7% said they are "not quite happy" with the political situation due to unsolved conflicts, divisiveness and restrictions of freedom and liberties.

About 15% said they are not happy at all because economic problems remain.

Bangkok Poll revealed 75% of 1,176 respondents believe Section 44 — which gives the regime leader overwhelming power — remains necessary after the charter referendum, compared with 19% of those saying it is unnecessary and will erode confidence.

Pheu Thai politicians yesterday were critical of recent events, and slammed the National Legislative Assembly decision to allow the regime to appoint 30 more members.

The NLA on Friday approved an amendment to the 2014 interim constitution to increase the number. The change was proposed on Thursday by the cabinet and the National Council for Peace and Order to "ease the workload".

Pheu Thai's Samart Kaewmeechai said the amendment is to accommodate state officials who work for the regime and are about to retire in September. He said the new seats are unnecessary because the NLA members hardly revise any bills when considering them.

A military source said the new NLA seats are likely to be given to military officers who will be promoted to key posts. Those who are about to retire are already NLA members, the source said.