

Govt ignores Abhisit's offer

UNIMPRESSED WITH HIS READINESS TO STAY OUT OF ELECTION IF HIS PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED

THE NATION

THE GOVERNMENT and the ruling Pheu Thai Party yesterday gave the cold shoulder to an offer from Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva that would see him take a political break if his proposal to get the country out of the political crisis is accepted by all the parties involved.

Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra said she was looking forward to seeing details of Abhisit's proposal, which is supposed to be unveiled tomorrow.

"I hope that Abhisit and the Democrat Party will not set any conditions," she said. "I believe that society is waiting patiently for the problems to be over. We are trying to find common ground, as Abhisit has said, so that we can move forward."

Abhisit, Yingluck's predecessor as prime minister, said yesterday that he would by tomorrow unveil his proposal, the result of his recent meetings with key political players.

"If all the parties involved accept my proposal, I will not contest the next election and will not assume any political position," he said. "This is to make sure that I will not derive any benefits if my proposal is implemented."

"I will just be an ordinary citizen who supports a reform that will be

carried out in line with my proposal."

Abhisit served as the opposition leader before the dissolution of the House of Representatives in December.

Pheu Thai secretary-general Phumtham Vechayachai said he was more interested in Abhisit's proposal than whether he would or would not contest the next election.

"It's no problem if Abhisit runs in the election or not," Phumtham said. "It's more important whether Abhisit's proposal will benefit the country."

"If his proposal really offers a way out for the country, it's no problem if Abhisit contests [the election] or does not."

Deputy Pheu Thai spokesman Anusorn Eamsa-ard said he viewed Abhisit's offer to skip the election as a ploy by the Democrat Party to pressure Pheu Thai to skip the election as well.

Anusorn said Abhisit was trying to find an excuse not to contest the next poll and when he made the offer, Pheu Thai would come under pressure to sacrifice itself too.

The anti-government People's Democratic Reform Committee said

Abhisit's offer to take a political break would not affect the group's rally for national reforms before an election is held. The rally has dragged on for more than six months.

PDRC spokesman Akanat Promphan said he believed Abhisit had good intentions towards the country, and the PDRC leaders would discuss whether to agree to Abhisit's proposal.

He insisted there was no conflict between the Democrat Party and the PDRC, which has many leaders who are former Democrat MPs. He said the PDRC's enemies were attempting to create such a perception.

But Buddhist monk Buddha Issara, a PDRC leader, shrugged off Abhisit's offer, saying that if the ex-prime minister agreed to have an election before reform, that meant he was against the PDRC's standpoint.

"It's politicians' nature to play some role that makes them look like a hero," he said. The monk said he planned to bring his followers to travel to Hua Hin between May 16 and 18 to "return the royal power to His Majesty the King", who has stayed there after leaving Siriraj Hospital last August.



ABHISIT

Meanwhile, another PDRC source said small groups of anti-government protesters would fan out to secure strategic spots on May 14, when a "people's revolution" is scheduled to rise up. By then, the rulings of the Constitutional Court and the National Anti-Corruption Commission for or against the prime minister are expected to be known, the source said.

The PDRC would move its rally base from Lumpini Park back to Democracy Monument the day before, on May 13.

"The military will be pressured to take some action," the source said.

"The game will be over although the fight will continue after that," the source said without elaborating.

Regarding Abhisit's proposal, Democrat deputy leader Nipit Intharasombat said he had made a sacrifice to try to get the country out of the political deadlock. But Abhisit is still the party leader because he has not resigned from the position.

Some military commanders expressed hope that the election would help ease the political conflict.

Air Force Commander-in-Chief Air Chief Marshal Prajin Jantong backed Abhisit's effort to help find a solution to the political deadlock. He said politicians should take part in the next election, tentatively scheduled for July 20, adding that doing so would provide a way out to the country.

The Defence Ministry permanent secretary, General Nipat Thonglek, said that the election would provide a "light of hope in the darkness".

Meanwhile, a Bangkok University survey conducted on economists from the country's 32 top institutions showed that more than 73 per cent of respondents want every sector to come to agreement on "reform" before a general election is held.

Election Commission member Somchai Srisuthiyakorn said the EC would work with the Council of State to draft an amendment to the Royal Decree calling for a new election.

The EC is expected to complete the draft and submit it for Cabinet approval before the May 8 deadline. The EC and the government on Wednesday reached an agreement to hold a new election on July 20.

The Centre for the Administration of Peace and Order proposed that the EC establish a committee to ensure the election is held fairly and peacefully and without being disrupted or blocked by protests, CAPO official Sirima Sunawin said.

Caretaker Deputy PM Surapong Tovichakchaikul said the committee, comprising military and police officials, would be empowered to arrest anyone trying to block the election.