

Peerasak says Senate can nominate PM candidate

THE NATION

NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE Assembly (NLA) vice president Peerasak Porjit has insisted that allowing the Senate to nominate prime minister candidates is in accordance with the intention of the additional referendum question.

Peerasak rejected criticism from politicians that the NLA had designed a special mechanism through the additional question to help the National Council for Peace and Order extend its power, arguing that the mechanism aims to prevent the charter from being scuttled.

He said for the first five years after the next general election, political parties would nominate PM candidates and the Senate had the right to vote to select the PM but if this process failed to achieve that, it could pave the way for a second process in which the Senate nominated PM candidates.

"The second process is optional. It is designed to prevent a crisis by allowing the Senate to nominate the PM, which is not against the intention of the additional referendum question," he said.

"This special mechanism to prevent political crises is the charter draft's strength. We have not designed it to benefit any particular individual."

Democrat Party deputy leader Ongart

Klampaiboon said the additional referendum question did not suggest that the appointed Senate could nominate PM candidates.

He warned the NLA not to act on a whim. And insisted that the question only referred to the public agreeing to allow the Senate to select the PM along with MPs. "If the assembly wants the Senate to nominate the PM candidates, it should have put that statement in the additional referendum question," he said.

"The NLA should act in an upfront manner and not take for granted that [just because] the majority [of people] approved of the additional question it can do anything it wants."

Ongart urged the Constitution Drafting Commission (CDC) to ensure that it amended the charter draft by taking into account the intention of the additional referendum question, and strictly comply with the essence of the question. In incorporating the question into the charter draft, the commission must ensure that the main principles of the charter, which the public approved of, were not affected.

The CDC must not allow any agencies to use the question for any individual's self-interest.

"The commission should act in the public interest and in a fair manner so the charter helps steer

the country on a smooth and solid path in accordance with the [reform] road map," he said.

Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha on Friday did not rule out the possibility of him remaining premier after next year's general election if his name were proposed for the job by Parliament.

"I'm not opening or closing my chance [to remain PM]," Prayut said. "I just want to take it step by step. I could be blamed if I announce anything in advance, so I prefer not to say." Prayut stressed that it was too early for any assumptions to be drawn on choosing the next PM as legal processes for the general election had just begun.

Meanwhile Prayut was upbeat about his government's two-year job approval rating. Government Spokesman Maj-General Sansern Kaewkamnerd said.

Bangkok Poll survey released on Saturday showed that the Prayut government's two-year job approval rating had increased from 5.92 for its 18-month performance to 6.19 for its two-year performance. Sansern also cited the latest rankings of the world's most liveable cities by the *Economist*, which showed that Bangkok is one of six cities that has undergone changes that make it more liveable over the past 12 months.