

# Charter 'will not mend political rift'

ABOUT 74 PER CENT DON'T BELIEVE THE NEW CONSTITUTION WILL ACHIEVE RECONCILIATION; SOME 86 PER CENT 'TO VOTE IN REFERENDUM'

THE SUNDAY NATION

MOST PEOPLE are not convinced that the new constitution being drafted will lead to national reconciliation, a public opinion survey has found.

Up to 74 per cent of the 1,198 respondents said they were not confident the new draft would bring about reconciliation, and a little over 22 per cent said they were confident, according to a poll conducted by Bangkok University's Research Centre released yesterday.

Most people surveyed by Bangkok Poll agreed with the provision to allow a non-elected PM and planned to vote in a public referendum on the charter.

About 73 per cent were not confident the charter draft would help eradicate corruption and vote-buying, compared to 24 per cent who said they were confident it would.

Almost 80 per cent of the respondents agreed with a provision in the charter draft to have political parties nominate PM candidates before an elec-

tion is held and the PM candidates could be elected or non-elected.

About 86 per cent said they would cast their ballots in the public referendum.

Some 77 per cent agreed with the provision in the charter to empower three independent agencies - the Election Commission, the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC) and the State Audit Commission - to issue recommendations or warnings to the Cabinet in cases where the government's policies could cause the country long-term damage.

Meanwhile, Constitution Drafting Commission spokesman Udom Rathamarit said the CDC was reviewing the wording of Article 187/3 over conflict of interest in the cases of members of parliament, senators, the prime minister, and ministers.

The provision does not ban MPs from holding ministerial posts as there are provisions banning them from transferring or interfering in the work of per-

manent officials. The political office holders are banned from carrying on businesses to prevent conflict of interest.

He said the CDC next week would start reviewing the provisional charter, which includes legalising the work of the National Council for Peace and Order, the term and administration of the Cabinet, the National Legislative Assembly, the National Reform Steering Assembly, independent agencies.

Udom said CDC chairman Meechai Ruchupan has been stressed over the past few days while working on the crucial provisions. He said Meechai wanted the charter to be practical and pose no problems in implementation.

Charter drafter General Niwat Sripen said the CDC would early next month present the charter draft to the NLA. He expected the meeting to be smooth without any tension or questioning by the NLA members, as the meeting was not about rejecting or accepting the draft.

He said some provisions in the draft may not be in keeping with the NLA's wishes but there would be no conflicts between the two agencies. "The CDC has tried to write the highest law to help solve the country's problems such as government abuse of its majority in Parliament," he said.

He rejected criticism that the CDC intended to write a charter draft that would be rejected in a public referendum.

NRSA whip secretary Kamnoon Sidhisamarn said he would meet Meechai to discuss public hearings on the charter draft.

He would ask Meechai if it were possible for the CDC to attend the NRSA meeting to discuss the issues in the charter draft and how the CDC plans to disseminate the draft content to the public.

He said if the assembly receives the charter draft from the CDC on January 29, it would distribute the copies to the members on February 1-2.