

# PM candidates face party curbs

## CDC heads off fears of non-elected leader

### POST REPORTERS

The Constitution Drafting Committee (CDC) may consider a new charter proposal requiring prime ministerial candidates to be members of political parties, a CDC spokesman revealed yesterday.

The proposal is intended to stop criticism from parties over the committee's proposed rules on the selection of a prime minister which would allow a non-elected prime minister to come to power, CDC spokesman Chartchai Na Chiang Mai said.

The CDC has proposed that parties be required to unveil up to three prime ministerial candidates each and inform the Election Commission (EC) of their lists before the election candidacy registration closes, with parliament then choosing the prime minister from the lists after the election.

The proposal has drawn flak from parties as it does not specify that a prime minister must be an elected representative, prompting speculation the premier can be chosen from outside the ranks of elected MPs. This would allow for a non-elected prime minister to come to power.

Regarding a recent survey by Bangkok Poll which showed that more than 88% of people did not understand the contents of the draft charter, Mr Chartchai said the CDC will have to work harder to educate the public about the draft after it finalises the document on March 29 in-line with the 180-day timeframe for the charter drafting.

He admitted that many people have to struggle to make ends meet and have no time to listen to information on the draft.

Udom Rathamarit, another CDC spokesman, said the draft charters have reviewed the draft based on feedback provided by the public and stakeholders. The

committee has also finished reviewing the charter provisions on the Constitutional Court.

Charter clauses now under consideration cover independent bodies, local administrations, rules on the selection of MPs and the composition of the Senate, he said.

Mr Udom said the CDC saw nothing wrong with its proposal calling for the indirect election of 200 senators elected from 20 professional groups, 10 from each group. Political parties which prefer direct elections slammed the proposed make-up, saying it was undemocratic and out of touch with the public.

Mr Udom insisted the proposed indirect Senate election would give all sectors a say in the process and would also help protect the Upper House from any form of political meddling.

He also said the CDC will have to consider Deputy Prime Minister Prawit

Wongsuwon's proposal for a wholly appointed Senate before any conclusion can be reached.

The proposed appointed Senate is meant to work for five years after a general election to ensure implementation of the military government's reforms, Gen Prawit has said. Mr Udom insisted the CDC has been working independently and does not bow to any pressure from others.

Sompong Sakawee, a member of the National Reform Steering Assembly (NRSA), said Gen Prawit's proposal for an appointed Senate would leave the country in deep trouble as well as send it backwards.

The proposal would help the military to cling to power, he said, adding the appointed Senate would likely be made up mainly of those from the military government.

A source at Government House said Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha will chair a meeting today of the so-called "five rivers of power" — the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO), the cabinet, the

National Legislative Assembly (NLA), the CDC and the NRSA.

The meeting is expected to discuss the draft-charting process, the government's 20-year strategy master plan and national reforms, the source said.

The five rivers need to step up efforts to come up with substantial results as the clock is ticking on the military's government's tenure in office with the general election expected to be held by next year, the source said.

Meanwhile, police from Phaya Thai station have arrested three members of a group calling themselves "The Red Route" who opposed the draft charter while they were campaigning at Victory Monument yesterday. They were later released without charge. Police recorded their personal data and released them an hour later.

In his Facebook, Anurak Jatewanich, a member of the group, said he had negotiated with plainclothes soldiers to allow the group to hold a "vote no" campaign for 15 minutes. But police arrested them after the activity ended.



**Chartchai: Public awareness lacking**