

Changing system not the answer

DR KER Sin Tze (“Picking out the winners in electoral systems”; last Saturday) proposed that the Non-Constituency MP (NCMP) scheme be altered to increase “participation in the decision-forming process” and “reduce the difficulty of enticing bright talents to serve in Parliament and the Government”.

With regard to the first justification, the proposal might indeed have the effect of increasing diversity in Parliament.

As Dr Ker pointed out when discussing the Hong Kong electoral system, proportional representation tends to favour smaller parties and independent candidates. If that is the intention, should proportional representation not be extended to choosing all the elected MPs in Parliament?

Perhaps Dr Ker suggested having proportional representation for only 10 additional MPs so that the number of such “vocal minorities” remains small and unable to pose much of a challenge to the majority party’s policies.

If so, it is rather difficult to see what the proposal

adds to the existing NCMP and Nominated MP (NMP) schemes. I suspect people will be sceptical about the proposal, seeing it as merely introducing token alternative voices in Parliament with no real clout.

Incidentally, I am not sure why the NCMP scheme was termed as being “inactive” until Parliament revised it in 2010 by increasing the

potential maximum number of NCMPs to nine. We have had NCMPs in Parliament since the scheme was introduced in 1984, except after the 1991 General Election when there were four opposition MPs in Parliament.

As for the second justification, it is already possible under the present constitutional system for any

MP, including an NCMP and an NMP, to be appointed a minister, or even prime minister if that individual commands the confidence of a majority of the MPs.

Of course, in practice, it is highly unlikely that MPs other than those from the political party having a majority in Parliament will be appointed to the Cabinet.

Increasing the potential pool of MPs by 10 will not really help to address the issue, because the true challenge that all political parties face is finding suitable people to stand for election in the first place.

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