

Putin approves changes allowing him to stay in power until 2036



Russian President Vladimir Putin delivers a speech during a session of the lower house of parliament in Moscow on Tuesday to consider constitutional changes. Photo: Sputnik via Reuters

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday opened the door to constitutional changes that would allow him to remain in power until 2036, Reuters reports.

Putin, who in January unveiled a major shake-up of Russian politics and a constitutional overhaul, is required by the constitution to step down in 2024 when his second sequential and fourth presidential term ends.

But addressing the State Duma, the lower house of parliament, he gave his qualified blessing to a proposed change to the constitution that would formally reset his presidential term tally to zero, the report said.

“The proposal to remove restrictions for any person, including the incumbent president ... In principle, this option would be possible, but on one condition – if the constitutional court gives an official ruling that such an amendment would not contradict the principles and main provisions of the constitution,” Putin was quoted as saying.

He said US President Franklin D. Roosevelt served four terms because of the upheaval his country was going through at the time was an example of why presidential term limits were sometimes superfluous.

“In conditions when a country is experiencing such shocks and difficulties, of course ... stability is perhaps more important and must be a priority,” he said, adding that Russia is still recovering from the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union.

If, as Putin’s critics suspect, the constitutional court gives its blessing to the amendment and it is backed in a nationwide vote in April, Putin could serve another two back-to-back six-year terms.

Were he to do that, and his health and electoral fortunes allow, he could stay in office until 2036 at which point he would be 83, Reuters noted.

Kremlin critic and opposition politician Alexei Navalny said he believes Putin is now set to become president for life, while Navalny's ally, Ivan Zhdanov, decried the move as tantamount to a constitutional coup.

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