



Scrutiny panel receives charter petition

A representative of a group concerned about the Constitution hands a petition to Constitution Scrutiny Committee spokesman Véera Pitrachart urging the panel to delete a clause in Article 27 of the draft charter.

The group comprising university lecturers reasoned that the clause, which allows parties concerned to propose legislation to promote and protect religions, would lead to religious discrimination and conflict.

Because of the proposed clause, certain groups of people in future might exploit it to offer preferential treatment to specific religions which could be damaging to the country, the group claimed.

The Constitution should uphold freedom of worship and offer equal treatment and protection to all religions, it said. *Bangkok Post Sat. 26-10-91*

Academics: Scrap last sentence of Article 27

The Nation

TWO academics and a doctor yesterday urged the National Legislative Assembly and the constitution scrutinizing committee to scrap the last sentence of Article 27, saying it would empower the state to violate the people's basic human rights.

The letter, submitted to the assembly and the scrutinizing committee, appealed to them to drop the sentence "the legislation to promote and protect [Thailand's] religion could be enacted."

It was signed by Prof Chaiwat Sathanant of Thammasat University, Prof Uthai Dulyakasem of Silpakorn University and Dr Chotchuang Chutinthorn.

They expressed concern that if the sentence was not deleted, it would enable the authorities to show favour towards any particular religious group in the future.

Article 27, if the last sentence was excluded, stipulates that a Thai is free to believe in any religion provided that his or her belief is not against the good morality of the public. His or her religious freedom is protected. The state could not violate such freedoms simply because he or she professes a different religious faith from others.

Apart from the open letter, Dr Chotchuang also enclosed his article entitled "Religious Freedom is Being Violated" to the assembly and the committee.

Dr Chotchuang said it was unnecessary to include the last sentence into Article 27, saying the criminal law already protects each religious group from persecuting others.

He quoted Thomas Jefferson as saying that there should be a "wall of separation between church and state". He pointed out that if the church and state were merged into one, the people would be oppressed.

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