

Over 77% plan to vote in charter referendum

POLL SHOWS 43 PER CENT WILL BACK DRAFT
BUT SOME 37 PER CENT REMAIN UNDECIDED

THE SUNDAY NATION

MORE THAN three-quarters of people polled in a new survey intend to vote in the August 7 referendum on the draft constitution, and more than 40 per cent will vote "yes".

The poll found that 77.7 per cent of the 1,733 respondents in all four regions of the country plan to cast their ballots.

More than 10 per cent do not intend to vote and the remaining 11.9 per cent are undecided, according to results of the survey released yesterday.

The survey was conducted by Bangkok University's Research Centre last week, one month before the national vote.

When asked how they would vote, 43.6 per cent said they would vote for the draft charter, 6.6 per cent would vote against it, and 13 per cent would abstain. However, 36.8 per cent of the respondents are undecided.

Meanwhile, the New Democracy Movement yesterday said it would file a malfeasance suit against officials for arresting their members while they were campaigning in Samut Prakan's Bang

Phli district about casting ballots in the referendum.

Led by Rangsiman Rome at Thammasat University, NDM announced its plan when its activities on the charter draft were stopped by the authorities.

Rangsiman said the group would file the suit at Bang Sao Thong Police Station against administrative and military officials, accusing them of violating Article 157 of the Criminal Code for allegedly abusing their authority. He alleged the arrests were illegal and a violation of human rights.

He also called on the government to improve the quality of food in prison and review measures relating to the detention of suspects when they appeared in court.

He said NDM members were chained at the ankles when they were brought to the court. "They were ill-

treated as if they were not human," he said.

Rakchart Wongathichart, another NDM member, denied that the group had distorted information in the charter draft, saying it only used the cover of the charter draft as the cover of their document. Rakchart insisted that the group intended to present different views and did not distort the charter draft. A total of 10,000 copies of the documents written by the group were printed. Internet users can download the information via a website.

Rakchart urged officials to stop intimidating the group and allow it to distribute the documents to voters so that they had well-rounded information before voting in the referendum.

"I admitted that our documents may carry mistakes but it is not a fake charter draft as alleged by the Constitution Drafting Commission," he said.

Pakorn Areekul, an NDM member, said he had submitted his group's charter draft documents to CDC chairman Meechai Ruchupan on May 18 during the training of charter draft specialists at Miracle Grand Hotel, but Meechai accused his group of discrediting the CDC.

He denied that his group was funded by capitalists, saying the money they used in printing the documents were public donations received since the group started campaigning on February 29. He said the group received more than Bt500,000 in donations.

He said it spent not more than Bt50,000 on printing the documents. The group would reveal details of how they spend public donations through Facebook and a website.

The NDM plans to meet Pheu Thai leader Yingluck Shinawatra and Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva this month to get their opinions about

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the charter draft and solutions for the country's problems.

Colonel Piyapong Klinpan, the National Council for Peace and Order's Public Relation Centre deputy chief, said the Election Commission and the CDC had a duty to check the finances of the NDM.

He said the NCPO's legal department was also checking where NDM had printed the documents, whether the content was wrong, and who supported the group. He said the council was ready to take legal action against the NDM if it were found to have committed any offences.

He said security officials were monitoring the group to determine if it had infiltrated other universities.

"This group of students stage campaigns with the backing of politicians. Their actions cannot instigate public sentiment because the majority of students are not convinced [about their actions]. If they continue their activities, people would finally get fed up with them and lose interest," he said.

NCPO spokesman Colonel Winthai Suvari said the council found that the NDM was linked with political activists such as Sombat Boonngam-anong, the leader of the Red Sunday group, as they had pictures taken together and posted on Facebook. "Supporting the NDM can be done in different ways, not just financial support. If we find that the support is beyond the legal boundary, we will take action," he said.

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