

More agencies drafted in to explain charter

POST REPORTERS

» Army commander Teerachai Nakwan-ich has ordered the Internal Security Operations Command to help explain the details of the constitution draft ahead of the August referendum.

Isoc spokesman Pirawat Saengthong said Gen Teerachai, the Isoc deputy chief, has put all Isoc units on stand-by as the Constitution Drafting Committee gears up to explain the draft's contents.

Isoc officials are also expected to encourage voters to turn out for the referendum and to explain the Election Commission's "do's and don'ts" to ensure people do not break the referendum law, Col Pirawat said.

The Public Referendum Act, which carries stiff penalties, is now in effect and the EC has issued guidelines.

Col Pirawat said Isoc has an extensive network of volunteers across the country and they can be mobilised to support the CDC charter education campaign if requested.

The number of volunteers is estimated to be about 500,000 throughout the country.

"If asked by the CDC, Isoc is ready to call in groups of volunteers to help. We believe the charter campaign will cover every area," he said.

The government is calling in every bit of help it can get, including the territorial defence "Ror Dor" students who are urging people to cast their votes in the Aug 7 referendum.

An opinion poll by Bangkok University Research Centre has shown a mixed response among voters who were asked whether opinions by academics or politicians would influence their decision in the referendum.

About 49% of the participants in the Bangkok Poll said criticism of the draft would have little or no impact on their decision, while 41% said it would. The remainder were not certain.

When asked about free speech aspects of the draft, 68% said both supporters and critics should be allowed to express their views based on a proper academic framework.

However, about 20% said they were concerned that free speech on the charter draft might influence voters' decisions and create more conflict.