

NDM DENIES HANDING OUT FAKE CHARTER COPIES

POST REPORTERS

» The New Democracy Movement yesterday denied claims it distributed fake copies of the draft charter to the public.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha has ordered the people behind the making and distribution of the fake copies be tracked down, prompting the regime to launch an investigation into the money trail of the NDM.

During a press briefing at Thammasat University's Tha Prachan campus, key NDM member Rakchart Wongathichart said the group had distributed documents which offer differing opinions about the draft charter, but were not falsified copies of the draft as alleged.

Pakorn Areekul, another NDM leader, said about 10,000 copies of the documents have been printed for distribution nationwide, with the cost being no more than three baht for each, or 30,000 baht in total.

He said the group held activities, including a recent free concert at the university, and was able to raise up to 270,000 baht. It has also received donations of about 500,000 baht since the group was set up.

Rangsiman Rome, another key figure of the group, said the documents did not have content that defames persons and agencies as alleged by Election Commission member Somchai Srisutthiyakorn.

National Council Peace and Order spokesman Piyapong Klinpan yesterday said the Constitution Drafting Committee and the EC are investigating the money trail of the NDM, while the NCPO's legal team is also monitoring the group's activities.

CDC chairman Meechai Ruchupan publicly complained on Thursday during a draft charter publicity campaign in Chiang Mai that fake documents had been found.

He said they looked very similar to the official summary of key issues about the draft constitution the CDC had distributed to the public.

With a month left until the referendum,

43.6% of voters say they would endorse the draft constitution, according to a poll.

Another 36.8% remain undecided and 13% would abstain while only 6.6% said they would reject it, according to the results of a Bangkok Poll survey released yesterday.

Some 77.7% of the respondents said they would vote on Aug 7 while 10.4% would not and 11.9% were uncertain.

The survey was conducted between Tuesday and Friday by interviewing people above the age of 18 nationwide using simple random sampling weighted by Interior Ministry census data. The margin of error was plus or minus 3%.

The results came amid demands for the right to campaign against the charter by scholars and groups of students, who feel they have not been given the chance to campaign against draft.

Constitution writers, meanwhile, have had numerous chances to explain the draft's strengths.

Seven students were arrested on June 23 for distributing flyers about the weak points of the draft in Samut Prakan province.

Charged with violating the junta's order against illegal assembly and the referendum law, the students refused to apply for bail, saying they had done nothing wrong. The Military Court finally released them on Wednesday and they pledged to continue to with their activities.

Gen Prayut said he suspected the students' activities were financed by some people wishing to destabilise the government.

A key Pheu Thai Party figure has accused the government and the military of not maintaining neutrality over the constitution referendum, saying they were misusing their power to influence voters.

Chaturon Chaisaeng, a former education minister, said the government and the NCPO needed to be even-handed in the lead-up to the referendum.

Five more years?, Spectrum »



YOU CAN'T MAKE ME: A City Hall official assists Nian Pongpichai, 99, as she has her photograph taken for an ID smart card, which the elderly can use in the Aug 7 referendum.

PHOTO: PATIPAT JANTRONG