



No. 02001/178

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8 March 2017

Dear Editor,

Having read the article “The perplexing case of Wat Dhammakaya” by Dr. James L. Taylor, on the website of New Mandala dated 6 March 2017, I feel obliged to clarify a few points as follows:

1. The article has conveyed false information concerning the Sangha Act – legislation governing Buddhist monastic community in Thailand. The Royal Thai Government has no intention to cancel or amend the Sangha Act. The only proposal currently being considered by the Committee on Religions, Arts, Culture and Tourism of the National Legislative Assembly is the amendment of the two provisions under Civil and Commercial Code (Article 1622 and 1623) concerning inheritance law related to Buddhist monks, which has nothing to do with controlling temple assets or reforming monastic education. Nevertheless, to avoid confusion and misunderstanding, the Committee has suspended its consideration on the aforesaid provisions.

2. The use of the designated control area at Wat Dhammakaya became necessary because those inside the temple compound refused to cooperate with and, in some cases, obstructed the authorities trying to carry out their duties. There has been no use of force or acts of violence by government officers as alleged. Relevant authorities have carried out their duties with utmost caution and well-considered manner, in line with legal procedures to apprehend those under arrest warrants. The designated control areas is enforced only within the compound of Wat Dhammakaya and does not affect other Buddhist temples in Thailand.

3. The case of Wat Dhammakaya is neither an issue of politics nor religion. Rather, it is an issue concerning a monk suspected of committing criminal offences but refusing to abide by the law. He has refused to comply with the summons and submit to the judicial process. Instead, he has tied his personal case to religion in order to mobilise his devotees to shield him from arrest and to pressure officers who are trying to conduct their lawful duties. Therefore, this case is clearly a matter of law enforcement and is completely separate from the issue of religion.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chirachai Punkrasin', written in a cursive style.

(Chirachai Punkrasin)
Ambassador

Editor,
New Mandala,
CANBERRA.