

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WE WELCOME YOUR VIEWS on anything newsworthy. Please include your name and address on your letters. We reserve the right to edit all letters for clarity, content and length.

A necessary check and balance

Re: "Outgoing court president was bold and controversial", July 18.

Constitutional Court president Wasan Soyphisudh's resignation represents a loss of someone your story correctly describes as a brilliant law student and judge.

Only about 5 per cent of Thai law-school graduates pass the bar exam and become barristers, who are qualified to become judges. The Constitutional Court judges were selected in an election among Supreme Court judges in general assembly, by secret ballot from their own ranks, by Administrative Court judges from their own ranks, and experts by a selection committee and confirmed by the Senate. So, they are the best of the best.

A few Thai politicians and their supporters protest against the courts whenever they rule against them, claiming they were democratically elected (as were Marcos and Hitler) and implying that they can do anything they want. It is this view that is undemocratic.

The retirement of this sterling judge is a reminder of the importance of the checks and balances provided by independent institutions, a system that distinguishes Thailand from its less-democratic neighbours. Despite what some affected politicians say, the courts are respected by the Thai public and their rare readings of important opinions serve to educate the public about the rule of law in society, as well as being positive role models.

The Brain
Bangkok

No comparison between the two

People are clamouring for the government to treat Thaksin Shinawatra the same as it does defrocked monk Wiraphon Sukphol, by revoking his pass-

port and demanding that the country hosting him send him back. I think they know full well that each case is totally different.

Wiraphon is accused of statutory rape, tax evasion, embezzlement and money laundering. The charges are brought under normal circumstance: no coup, no hidden agenda, and no political motive – just plain justice at work.

By contrast, Thaksin was elected to office and endorsed by royal command to run the government, but was illegally toppled by the coup. The rest is history. The coup was irreversible, the damage was done and the Constitution was annihilated. The court had no choice but to convict him to justify the coup's action. Imagine what would happen if the court acquitted him? Big mess. Can't be done.

Like I've said before, if you fasten the first button of your shirt wrong, the shirtfront will be crooked. You have to unbutton them all and redo from the beginning.

Somsak Pola
Samut Prakarn

Govt has its priorities wrong

Let me get this straight. The Thai government encourages the building of automobile manufacturing plants here. Then the banks offer unprecedented financing plans to allow people to buy them. As a grand finale, the government offers first-time buyers a Bt100,000 discount to buy a new car.

Now we have new cars all over city streets, but not many on the highways. This is because 90 per cent of the highways in Thailand are two-lane roads, one lane in each direction. The US has monitored what few two-lane highways still exist there and found them to have the highest accident rates.

So what does the Thai government do? Does it borrow Bt2 trillion to begin a programme of

widening the highways or possibly even an aqueduct to run off some of the water heading south every year? Of course not – that would be too logical.

Rather, it borrows that money to build a high-speed train system.

Observation balloons, aircraft carriers, almost a submarine, a high-speed train and maybe even a nuclear power plant. So you say, "If that's the way you feel, why don't you leave?" Why would I? It's more fun staying here and watching the Keystone Kops revisited.

John Arnone
Yasothon

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