

# **Press Release**

## **Devotees of Wat Phra Dhammakaya**

According to media reports regarding World Peace Valley Meditation Centre at Khao Yai, the Devotees of Wat Phra Dhammakaya would like to make the following statements:

1. World Peace Valley Meditation Centre is located at Moo 6, Pongtalong Subdistrict, Pakchong District, Nakhorn Ratchasima Province. There is a proper title deed for this property. It is not located in the National Forest and does not belong to the Agricultural Land Reform Office. The land is not designated strictly for agriculture - it can legally be used for general purposes.
2. The Maharatana Upasika Chand Foundation, in sponsorship of Phrarajabhavanavisudh, obtained legal and proper permission for the construction of World Peace Valley Meditation Centre from Pongtalong Subdistrict Administration Office on 11 September 2013.
3. World Peace Valley Meditation Centre was established as a place for monks, novices, government employees, youth, and the general public to practice meditation, with the purpose of reviving morals and values in the Thai community. This facility does not belong to any individual, but is a property of Buddhism and the society as a whole.
4. Those participating in meditation retreats are required to observe the Eight Precepts: They must refrain from taking meals after midday, consuming alcohol, and smoking of any kind. They must also dress in full-white attire. These participants rise at 4.30 in the morning to engage in morning chanting and meditation, and to listen to Dhamma talks. They live a simple, humble life: Participants share community restrooms and bedrooms without any air conditioning, and the beds are made of wood and are 90 cm wide. The meditation hall seems large, but that is because it is designed to accommodate up to 1,500 meditation practitioners.
5. In the meantime, the authorities have also investigated other meditation centres affiliated with Wat Phra Dhammakaya. These investigations seem to be without reasonable grounds. For example, authorities were sent to Tudongkhasathan Lanna in Sansai District, Chiang Mai Province, to investigate whether it encroaches on protected forest reserves, even though the center is located in the city, directly next to Maejo University. Authorities were also sent to the Meditation Centre in Bangpahan District, Ayutthaya Province, to investigate whether it encroaches on forest reserves, even though the center is located in the middle of a rice paddy. There are also no forest reserves in any of the nearby areas. Even the authorities who were ordered to conduct the investigation were puzzled.

Is this type of order fair and just? Please remember that all government sectors are established by the mandate of the people. Its operations are funded by the tax-paying public, in order to support the

public welfare. The administrative heads of these government sectors should not misconceive that they have the power to issue any orders of personal interest.

If the acts carried out by the government are seen as overreaching, with the intention of harassing its citizens and monks, it would go against Prime Minister General Prayuth Chan-o-cha's goal of maintaining peace and order.

7. The temple's devotees plead with the authorities for fairness—to not to be selective, and to not victimize its citizens. We plead with the press to not be manipulated by those who may be carrying out their duties with biases, discrimination, and a hidden agenda.

Mr. Ong-art Thamnita  
Spokesperson, Devotees of Wat Phra Dhammakaya  
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