

KKU President Absent, NHRC Hears Law Dean's Case



Mr. Kittibodi Yaipool (far right) prepares to address the Commission.

BANGKOK – The National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRC) met yesterday to continue its investigation into the abrupt dismissal of Acting Dean Kittibodi Yaipool from Khon Kaen University's Law Faculty this past June. Following his dismissal, Mr. Kittibodi asked for a hearing from the NHRC on the grounds that he was dismissed without due process.

The NHRC summoned all concerned parties to meet in Bangkok yesterday, but KKU President Kittichai Triratanasirichai chose not to attend. Instead, he sent a representative to speak on his behalf.

Mr. Kittibodi founded the Law Faculty in 2006 and began serving as the Acting Dean. In only five years, his faculty has [gained wide recognition](#) for its contributions to human rights activism throughout Northeast Thailand.

However, while awaiting his overdue evaluation and a promotion to Dean this past June, Mr. Kittibodi received notification of his immediate dismissal. On June 16, the Office of the President accused Mr. Kittibodi and his staff of destroying official documents and barred them from entering the grounds of the faculty.

Mr. Kittibodi insists that no documents were destroyed under his watch and now seeks a fair trial to present his case.

Mr. Surasee Kosolnavin, a former chairman of the NHRC and a current lecturer at KKU's Faculty of Law, believes that Mr.

Kittibodi's involvement in human rights and civil society movements might have unnerved the more traditional teachers and administrators.

"[Mr. Kittibodi and his staff] encourage students to participate more in learning from real life experience. The old style of teaching was basically to learn through rote memorization, not analysis. Some teachers familiar with the old style of teaching might not understand. That's what led to this disagreement," he said in an interview.

But Mr. Surasee believes that Mr. Kittibodi will get his job back. "He has brought a lot of improvement to this faculty... and I believe that he is innocent," he said. In order for the case to proceed, however, "[The Office of the President] needs to notify Kittibodi about why he was dismissed from his position."

According to Mr. Kittibodi, yesterday's representative for President Kittichai could not clearly explain the cause for dismissal. Next Monday, the NHRC will summon President Kittichai a second time so he can present his side of the case himself.

"We have to wait for the explanation from the President, but I am hopeful [to win the case] because the representative who came today couldn't tell us the grounds for the transfer [from my position]," said Mr. Kittibodi. "This is the main question that we need answered."

For now, Mr. Kittibodi and the NHRC are waiting patiently.