

‘Review’ legal action dropped

POLICE DECIDED YESTERDAY not to pursue legal action against the Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review* after its lawyer handed over a letter of apology, in which it said it never had an intention “to generate any adverse commentary” on the Thai monarchy.

Police Commissioner-General Sant Sarutanond said police would also consider today the magazine’s appeal against the revocation of its journalists’ visas.

“A meeting of senior police unanimously agreed that no legal action would be taken against the four *Far Eastern Economic Review* journalists. We will use the letter of apology when we consider their appeal,” Sant said.

A representative of National Assembly President Uthai Pimchaichon received the letter of apology from [David Lyman](#), the *Review*’s lawyer.

Sant told reporters that he could not say whether the controversy over the January 10 article had now ended with the *Review*’s letter of apology.

The letter, signed by the *Review*’s editor Michael Vatikiotis, read: “We can only repeat that we have the highest respect for Thailand’s unique institution [the monarchy] and we understand Thai culture. We will continue to be vigilant in the future that we do not cause offence to Thai sensibilities about the monarchy.”

It also expressed a hope that “this statement of apology to you as representative of the Thai people will allow this unfortunate incident to be put behind us and enable the *Far Eastern Economic Review* to continue the productive relationship it has maintained with Thailand and the Thai people for over 50 years”.

Lyman told reporters he thought that the letter of apology would assist in police consideration of the *Review*’s appeal to reissue visas and work permits for its journalists, allowing them to return to work.

Police revoked the visas and working permits of the *Review*’s Bangkok bureau chief Shawn Crispin and correspondent Rodney Tasker, and threatened to blacklist Hong Kong-based publisher Philip Revzin and Vatikiotis on grounds that a January 10 article in the magazine threatened national security.

Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra claimed that the article, which referred to tensions between the Royal Palace and himself, also affected the “highest institution”.

Sant added that no legal action would be taken against a senator, Somkiat Onwimon, who translated the controversial article and distributed it to others against the wishes of the premier.

But the police chief said more copies should not be distributed due to the unsuitability of its content.

Meanwhile, Somkiat said that his intention in translating the article had been to let others have an opportunity to read it themselves before making comment.

“If one reads it carefully, one will find that the article does no harm to the monarchy, but simply reflects the poor performance of the premier,” he said.