**Consultative Meeting on Anti-Terrorism Bill**

Following a request made, the Thulawa Association of the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo was granted a meeting with the Honourable Minister of Justice, Dr. Wijeyadasa Rajapaksa on the 29th of June, 2023. The primary objective of this meeting was to discuss and engage in a constructive dialogue regarding the proposed Anti-Terrorism Bill and to recommend potential amendments to address concerns raised by the public. This meeting with the Minister was the culmination of a series of events, including a Discussion Circle session held by the Thulawa Association, where experts presented arguments both for and against the amendment.

The Thulawa Association, with its commitment to fostering informed discourse on legal matters, had already laid the groundwork for this dialogue by hosting a Discussion Circle session. During this session, panelists rigorously examined the merits and drawbacks of the proposed Anti-Terrorism Bill. The representatives of the Thulawa Association and other undergraduates of the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, gained valuable insights into the complexities of the issue, ensuring that they approached the meeting with the Honourable Minister with a deep understanding of the various perspectives.

The meeting with the Honourable Minister was marked by a candid and constructive exchange of ideas. The Minister underscored the pressing need for updated legislation to combat contemporary threats, particularly in the realm of cyber-terrorism. He highlighted the fact that the existing legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, was enacted in the 1979 and also happened to be a ‘temporary provision’ to cater to the needs of the civil war at the time, was no longer adequately equipped to address the multifaceted challenges of modern-day terrorism. He particularly stressed on the need to address cyber-terrorism which poses a significant threat that necessitates a legislative framework capable of effectively countering this evolving menace, and which the Ministry was now focused on.

In response, members of the Thulawa Association presented their recommendations, which were informed by the discussions held during the earlier Discussion Circle session. They emphasized the importance of striking a delicate balance between safeguarding national security and protecting individual rights and freedoms. It was acknowledged that any legislation targeting terrorism must be robust but also respect the principles of due process, transparency, and accountability, which the preceding legislation, the Prevention of Terrorism Act, was quite lacking.

Furthermore, the Thulawa Association recommended a comprehensive review of the proposed Anti-Terrorism Bill to ensure that it aligns with international best practices and human rights standards. They stressed the importance of engaging various stakeholders, including legal experts, civil society organizations, and the general public, in this crucial process to ensure that the bill truly reflects the democratic values and aspirations of the Sri Lankan people.

This fruitful exchange of ideas serves as a shining example of how academic institutions and policymakers can work together to address complex legal issues and create legislation that safeguards both national security and individual liberties. The Minister appreciated the efforts of the representatives and declared that the Thulawa Association of the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, was the only academic institution to have provided insights to him regarding the proposed the bill. As Sri Lanka faces the challenges of the modern era, this engagement offers hope for a future where the rule of law and human rights remain at the forefront of the nation's legislative efforts.