

UNIVERSITIES

Autonomy approved

NLA supports independence for 3 top institutions

■ *The Nation*

THE NATIONAL Legislative Assembly (NLA) voted overwhelmingly yesterday for controversial bills that will allow three major universities to operate independently from government supervision.

The passing of the bills means that Chulalongkorn and Chiang Mai Universities, and King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Lat Krabang can freely run their education and own affairs.

They will be able to hire their own personnel without budget constraints or endure problems caused by bureaucratic red tape.

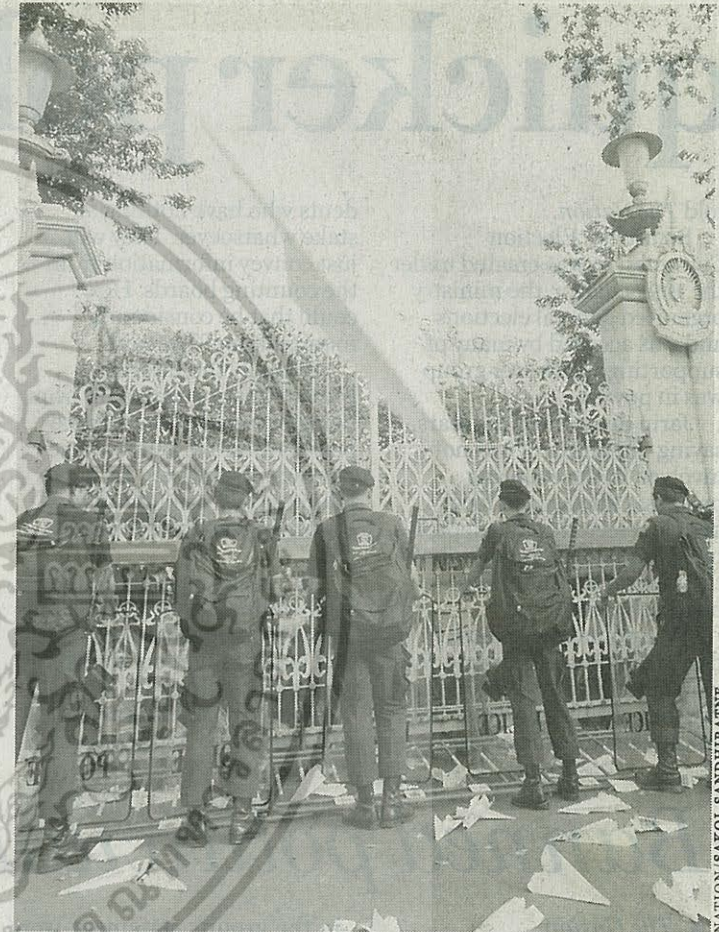
The bills were passed despite heavy opposition and criticism from student groups and those

who oppose independence. They claimed that the checks-and-balance mechanism and outside inspection of the three universities' affairs and management of assets would be impossible.

A large number of students and opponents of the independence move gathered outside Parliament House to try to disrupt the NLA while it vetted the bills. They made a human chain surrounding the compound and later sent numerous paper planes carrying messages condemning the NLA into the Parliament building.

NLA member Prasong Soonsiri, who had been against the bills, accused the NLA members who served on the three universities' executive boards of benefiting from the move. He said they should feel ashamed for the speedy vetting and passage of the bills.

However, the meeting continued amid protests of NLA members opposed to the bills. A request to have the session post-



POLICE GUARD an entrance to Parliament yesterday as protesters hurl paper planes carrying messages attacking the National Legislative Assembly. The protesters wanted the NLA to stop passing bills.

poned to have the bills vetted by the elected assembly after the general election on Sunday was shot down by a 130-29 vote.

The NLA also vetted a bill on protective measures for employ-

ees and passed it in the second and third hearing with a 110-1 vote.

A bill on protective moves against savings accounts was also passed with a 129-4 vote.

NATION/SAKOL SANDHIRATNE