

Bangkok remains calm during Songkran as Government continues to work towards resolving political situation

The overall situation in Bangkok remained calm during the Songkran holidays. On 14 April 2010, the demonstrators vacated their initial protest site at Phan Fah Bridge to regroup in the areas around Ratchaprasong Intersection.

Following the incidents on 10 April, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva stated on 12 April that the Government would continue to work to resolve the current situation by, on the one hand, uncovering the facts about the 10 April incidents with the focus being placed on separating those involved in such terrorist acts from the others, and, on the other hand, by working towards political solutions by addressing the legitimate demands made by the demonstrators.

In this regard, the Government has set up a fact-finding committee to look into the 10 April incidents. It also stands ready to extend cooperation to parallel fact-finding efforts by independent agencies, such as the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC). At the same time, the police continue to conduct investigations into various incidents of disturbances with particular attention given to the incidents on 10 April in order to prosecute those who violated the law. Evidence will be gathered from witnesses from all sides. Members of the public, who witnessed the incidents, have been asked to assist the authorities by providing evidence, including photographs or video clips which may be used to establish the facts.

Meanwhile, remedies are also being provided to those affected by the incidents – be they security officers or demonstrators. Specifically for foreigners visiting Thailand, the Royal Thai Government has, since May 2009, maintained a special insurance scheme to assist those affected by incidents of violence. The scheme – as recently renewed from 9 April 2010 at 16.31 hrs. until 31 March 2011 at 16.30 hrs., covers losses and damages, including loss of life or limbs, hospital expenses, necessary hospital stays, for foreign visitors/tourists who entered the Kingdom legally. For more information on the scheme including eligibility of claims, the authorities have set up a hotline at +662-205-7711.

Despite the current demonstrations, it should be noted that popular tourist destinations outside of Bangkok have not been affected. The country's overall transportation system, including all its airports, operates normally. The Royal Thai Government attaches priority to ensuring public safety, including that of foreigners residing in Thailand, and will continue to implement measures to ensure public safety, including checkpoints and patrols. In addition, foreigners have never been targeted in the on-going political conflict. Be that as it may, foreigners are asked to be vigilant, follow news developments, and exercise extra caution in, if not avoiding, areas where demonstrators gather. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has a 24-hour English language hotline at 1672 to provide tourists with further information. The tourist police can also be reached at 1155.

In addition, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a 24-hour operation centre, which can provide foreigners with further information at +662-575-1023, +662-981-7225, +66-88-022-1540 or +66-88-022-1541.

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