

Government restructures CRES to streamline efforts to enforce law and order

On 16 April 2010 at 21.15 hrs., Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva gave a televised address to update the public on the Government's effort to address the situation pertaining to the on-going demonstrations.

Prime Minister Abhisit first expressed his appreciation to officials – military, police and civilian – at all levels for their continued efforts in trying to address problems of concern to the public, working full time during the Songkran holidays. He also thanked people who have expressed support for him, the Government.

Turning to government action, Prime Minister Abhisit said that the Government has continued to pursue the two major issues as stated during his previous address on 12 April. The first is to address the grievances raised by the demonstrators pertaining to injustice and political demands. This, he stressed, are being discussed with a view to finding a political solution. The second, which is the main problem at hand, is to tackle those terrorist elements, who have infiltrated and exploited innocent demonstrators. Notwithstanding efforts on the first issue, the Government is fully aware of the need to resolve the second issue decisively as it relates to the preservation of the rule of law, national security and protection of the country's principal institutions, adding that various sectors in society have also joined efforts in this regard, and that the situation has changed somewhat with the demonstrators converging at Ratchaprasong Intersection and the areas around Phan Fah Bridge and Radjadamnern Avenue now cleared for the public to commute as normal.

In terms of enforcing the law, Prime Minister Abhisit, referring to the failed attempt by the police on 16 April to arrest those protest leaders against whom the Court has issued arrest warrants, affirmed that efforts would continue. What the Government and the Centre for the Resolution of the Emergency Situation have done is to undertake measures to ensure that the law be enforced more effectively. In this connection, the authorities have issued summons to people suspected of lending support in connection to the demonstrations or the terrorist acts, either in terms of doing business, giving shelter or facilities or participating in inciting disturbances. In addition, in order to expedite the investigation, all cases relating to the terrorist acts have been designated as special cases under the Department of Special Investigation (DSI), Ministry of Justice.

Furthermore, Prime Minister Abhisit said that having reviewed the organizational structure in dealing with the situation, he has decided to make certain adjustments to the Centre of the Resolution of the Emergency Situation (CRES) in order make its operations more unified and integrated, particularly in dealing with the terrorist problems. In this regard, to streamline the chain of command, he has appointed General Anupong Paochinda, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army, as Chief Official in charge of operations, replacing Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban.

On a final note, Prime Minister Abhisit reassured the public of the Government's determination to address their grievances, and sought public cooperation in this regard, asking them to be patient and understanding towards certain implications that might arise due to the officers' operations. He also reaffirmed the Government's intention to act in the interest of the majority of people in the country.

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