

THAILAND UPDATE

Political Situation in Thailand and Measures of the Government

Political Situation and Mass Demonstrations

- On 9 March 2010, Foreign Minister Kasit Piromya briefed the diplomatic corps on the current political situation in Thailand in connection to the upcoming planned demonstrations by the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship (UDD) and the security measures prepared in light of the situation.
- The UDD core leaders have been traveling throughout the country to rally support from the provinces to join the mass demonstration in Bangkok. The objective of the UDD's rally is to pressure the government to dissolve the House of Representatives and the Prime Minister to resign. The demonstrations which took place today numbered a few thousands in major intersections around Bangkok and dispersed without incident around 4PM.

Government's Measures and Preparation

- The Cabinet on March 9, 2010, approved the use of the Internal Security Act (ISA) for the whole of the Bangkok metropolitan area and seven other provinces surrounding Bangkok from March 11-23, 2010 in light of the anti-government rally by the UDD. This is to provide relevant agencies with the legal framework to execute their duties in Bangkok and key provinces. Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban has been charged with monitoring the overall security operation.
- The Royal Thai Government (RTG) has been continually engaged in dialogue with all groups of the society, and is responsive and sensitive to the issues of the society. The RTG has established a working group to coordinate with leaders of the demonstrators. Secretary General to the Prime Minister Mr. Korbsak Sabhavasut is head of the working group, which is charged with communicating with demonstrations leaders to prevent any misunderstanding which may lead to use of violence or inconvenience to the public at large.
- On security measures, the invocation of the ISA would enable security officials from civilian and law enforcement agencies to take effective and unified efforts in providing protection for the general public, including by giving them the authority to enforce related laws, such as those on land traffic, arms and firearms control and emergency medicine services. All officials would proceed in accordance with the rule of law and with the utmost restraint, and that, if necessary, crowd control measures of international standards would be used.
- Furthermore, there would be "Rapid Force Units" consisting of both police and army officers stationed at each police station in Bangkok, which could be called upon to tackle any incidents of violence, should they occur. With the exception of these special units, the security forces would carry only riot gears (e.g. batons and shields) with no firearms.
- Authorities concerned will act in accordance with the ruling of the Administrative Court which was given as a result of the incident that took place on October 7, 2008, stating that security authorities have the right to carry out its duties in dissolving demonstrations, should demonstrations cause a massive disruption to the daily life of the people and the functioning of the RTG and public services.
- The Governor of Bangkok has been assigned to meet over 2,000 community leaders across Bangkok to inform on the security arrangements to ensure the safety of lives and property in Bangkok.
- The RTG is doing its best to provide the utmost security to all residents in Bangkok and Thailand, including the diplomatic corps and other foreigners. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has set up a 24-hour task force to assist the diplomatic community in answering questions and coordination with regard to any security needs. The phone numbers of the task force center are (662) 575-1023, (662) 981-7225.

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