

## **Emergency Decree lifted in three more provinces as steady progress made on reconciliation plan**

On 16 August 2010, Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva revoked the use of the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situation, B.E. 2548 (2005) in three more provinces, namely, Chiangmai, Chiangrai and Ubon Ratchathani. The decision followed the recommendation by the Centre for the Resolution of Emergency Situation (CRES), which had assessed the security situation in the provinces where the Emergency Decree remains in force.

The Royal Thai Government's intention has been to gradually lift the Emergency Decree where the situation has eased and to fully return to the use of normal law enforcement mechanisms in ensuring peace and order.

With this latest decision and the previous ones on 6, 20 and 29 July 2010 to lift the state of emergency in five, three and six provinces respectively, the Emergency Decree now remains in effect in seven provinces where its use is still deemed necessary. These are: Bangkok, Nonthaburi, Samut Prakan, Pathumthani, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, and Nakhon Rachasima.

Meanwhile, progress has continued to be made on the implementation of the reconciliation plan. On 3 August 2010, the Independent Fact-finding Commission for Reconciliation, chaired by Dr. Kanit Na Nakorn, submitted its progress report and recommendations to the Thai Cabinet. Among other things, the Commission informed the Cabinet of the appointment of its members as well as a number of informal meetings it had held with civil society networks and representatives of the diplomatic corps and international organizations. The Commission also put forward for the Cabinet's consideration five preliminary recommendations including using the Emergency Decree only as necessary and in accordance with conditions prescribed by the law so as not to disproportionately affect rights of the people; ensuring that treatment of suspects give due regard to their basic rights while reducing treatment that might affect their rights and human dignity such as the use of shackles; ensuring the neutrality and credibility of the justice process, such as by reducing press conferences, gathering sufficient evidence and witnesses at the beginning of investigations and laying appropriate charges; disclosing information about the deaths and those who suffered injuries and losses from the protests on all sides; as well as making publicly available information on the number and condition of protesters charged and detained under the Emergency Decree and other laws.

Furthermore, the Commission has set up 3 working groups to facilitate its work. These include a working group on fact finding, a working group on prevention of recurring conflict, and a working group on remedies and

reconciliation. The Commission has also traveled to the provinces to listen to the views of diverse groups, starting with Chiangmai on 5 August 2010.

Regarding the national reform process, the National Reform Committee, chaired by former prime minister Anand Panyarachun, has identified 14 issues for which work plans would be formulated, namely, 1) housing; 2) wages, quality of life, labour; 3) social welfare and protection; 4) education; 5) debt; 6) state budgetary process; 7) decentralization and roles of local administration; 8) community building; 9) civil service, especially abuse of power; 10) justice process; 11) water resource management; 12) health care system, especially disparity between the rich and poor; 13) mafia influence; and 14) economic management for fairness. A large public forum would be held on 23 September 2010 in Bangkok to discuss the various issues while smaller regional forums would be held during the month of August.

At the same time, the National Reform Assembly, chaired by Dr. Prawes Wasi, has established 14 working committees to push forward the reform agenda, involving various networks or groups of people, such as local administrative bodies, civil society networks and community leaders, unskilled labourers, women's groups, youth, disadvantaged persons, business sector, and artists. There are also committees dealing with such issues as higher education, communications, resource distribution, justice and provisional communities. The role of these working committees would be to generate a driving force for reform within society, promote public participation and strengthen the various civil networks and get them involved in contributing ideas for reform. For example, the committee of local administrative bodies should be able to mobilise all villages to take part in the reform process, while universities would be involved in the process through the committee working on higher education, and cooperation of the media in promoting public awareness and participation would be enlisted through the committee on communications.

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