

Foreign Ministry briefs Diplomatic Corps on State of Emergency in Bangkok

September 3, 2008

On 2 September 2008, Mr. Virasakdi Futrakul, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Mr. Chatri Archjananun, Director of the Legal Affairs Division, Department of Treaties and Legal Affairs, briefed more than 100 representatives from 67 diplomatic missions and 15 international organizations in Thailand on the invocation of the Emergency Decree on Public Administration in Emergency Situation, B.E. 2548 (2005) in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area.

Following the briefing, Mr. Tharit Charungvat, Director-General of the Department of Information and Foreign Ministry Spokesman, talked to the press about the above-mentioned briefing as follows:

1. Permanent Secretary Virasakdi briefed the diplomatic corps about the unrest which occurred in the early hours of 2 September 2008 between supporters of the People's Alliance for Democracy (PAD) and those of the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship of Thailand (UDDT), which necessitated the declaration of the state of emergency in the Bangkok Metropolitan Area by the Prime Minister. The declaration of the state of emergency was in accordance with the rule of law and the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand. Furthermore, no action would be taken beyond that permissible under the Constitution.
2. Mr. Virasakdi relayed the main message of the press conference by General Anuphong Phaochinda, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Army, in his capacity as the Chief Official responsible for resolving the emergency situation, that his main task is to prevent a recurrence of violence. Moreover, the operation of the Army is predominantly to support as and when necessary the work of the Police, and neither officials would carry any weapons or use force. In addition, the role of the committee responsible for resolving the emergency situation is to prevent the recurrence of violence and the maintenance of public safety, not the political resolution of the situation.
3. The state of emergency in this instance has been limited to the Bangkok Metropolitan Area, and within Bangkok only a few areas have been affected.
4. The Emergency Decree is only a temporary measure. Though it has a designated timeframe of three months, it may be rescinded earlier once the situation returns to normal. In response to a question about effects upon Thailand's tourism, the Permanent Secretary reaffirmed that tourists should not cancel their travel plans to Thailand and that tours can still take place as normal. As for the Foreign Ministry itself, it will proceed with the ASEAN Senior Officials Meeting as planned from 3-5 September 2008 at the resort town of Hua Hin, Prachuap Khiri Khan province, to discuss preparations for the upcoming ASEAN Summit in Bangkok later this year.