

THAI COUP LEADER PRAYUTH SAYS COUNTRY NEEDS
TIME BEFORE NEW VOTE
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(Following is prepared speech of General Prayuth Chan-Ocha, Thailand's coup leader.)

- Good evening, On behalf of the National Council for Peace and Order, I would like to thank all the people and government officials who have supported and cooperated with the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) throughout the previous week. The situation on a whole has been relatively calm.

- The reason NCPO has taken control of national administration was because of the prolonged political deadlock, protests, and violence. There were also widespread of illegal activities that were affecting the well-beings of the people. The caretaker government was unable to perform their duties effectively. National budget for the fiscal year 2014 was disrupted and delayed. If these problems persist, national economy will be affected, as well as the interests of those countries with long-term agreements with Thailand.

- The NCPO has taken control of the situation in order to stop violence and loosen some constraints that have prevented the previous government from moving the country forward, and to solve urgent national crisis. This is to return happiness to the Thai people and foreign nationals residing in Thailand, and to place the Monarchy above all conflicts.

- The scope of work of NCPO comprised 2 main work groups, namely,

o Work group 1: Maintaining national security

* The invocation of the Martial Law, the highest security law, was necessary as it gave the officials total control to stop the ongoing violence. The existing laws were ineffective in stopping the conflicts, or violence. This is to provide security to the lives and property of the people. People will learn to respect the law and respect human rights. However, all officials will try to use the power under the Martial Law only as necessary to ensure minimal effects

on the people and to avoid human rights violation. When the situation returns to normal, the Martial Law will be immediately lifted.

* Regarding the curfew, it is intended to restore law and order, and to safeguard the society. There might be some disruptions in people's traveling and daily lives. We have to strictly enforce the curfew in the beginning in order to separate perpetrators of crimes from the law abiding citizens, and stop movements of military-grade weapons and explosive devices, and other illegal activities such as narcotic smuggling. It is also to stop armed groups from committing violent acts. Since 22 May, many members of armed groups have been apprehended and a large amount of military-grade weapons have been seized.

* Shorten the length of the curfew will depend on the situation. The NCPO has shortened the curfew, from between 2200 - 0500

to between 0000 - 0400. If the situation improves, curfew hours will be shortened in areas that have no incidents and in tourist areas. Eventually we are planning to lift the curfew altogether as soon as possible.

* To minimize the effects of the curfew, some exemptions were announced. People and organizations such as doctors, hospitals, energy transports, tourists, night shift workers, are allowed to travel during curfew hours with the permission of the police/military personnel. This has been carried without any incidents. People were safe to travel to and from their homes after having been subjected to the risks caused by violence and prolonged protests for the past 6 months.

* It was necessary for us to request that certain individuals "report" to the officials. These individuals included people who are directly and indirectly involve with the conflict such as protest leaders, key supporters, academics, and influential people, etc. These people were requested to report to officials in order to separate them and allow them to have a "cooling-off" period. They will have the opportunity to rethink their actions and listen to other opinions in order to let the country move forward. Under the Martial Law, they can keep up to 7 days and those who face criminal charges will undergo due judicial process.

* Individuals who were invited to report to NCPO were kept 1-2 days, 3-4 days, or 5-6 days. People with violent tendency were kept longer, but not exceeding 7 days. They were well looked after and accommodated. There were no tortures, threats, restraints, or human rights violations. Those who failed to report

to NCPO are considered uncooperative in the reconciliation effort and the law. They will be prosecuted according to the law. Some of these people are still inciting violence and will be stopped at all costs.

* We cannot keep fighting each other just because we think differently, or use the law to our own advantage. This will only create more conflicts. People will be unhappy and the country will be unstable and lose its credibility among the international community. All sides must cooperate and unite, and stop using violence. Differences should be discussed in order to find agreeable solutions, move the country forward, and return happiness to the people.

* Regarding the prevention of political gathering of more than 5 people, this also is necessary. Because we are in the initial phase of our operation, the NCPO cannot allow any groups to create incidents that may affect the stability of the country. If one group is allowed to form, then others will follow and the situation will escalate. We are urging people to not gather in order to avoid confrontations. NCPO will arrest any groups that violate this law.

* As for media control, some programs or stations have to be stopped because some of these medias, including social media, have been used, during the past 9 years and during the 6 months of continued protests, to distort the facts and create hatred among the people. There were incidents of threats and propagandas to gain supporters. One side questioned the credibility of the government while the other side used the laws to argue their case. So called "academics" were interviewed with unbalanced

and incomplete facts creating confusion among the people. There were the reasons why some of the medias have to be temporary suspended. NCPO does not have the policy to interfere with the use of social media in any forms.

* Reshuffles of government officials are internal affairs. It is necessary to reduce the conflicts within these agencies. It is not to promote one side while punishing the other as most people claimed. People who have been reshuffled are those who were involved with the previous government and needed to be moved in order to resolve the conflicts. Internal reshuffles are under the responsibility of the permanent secretaries, and caretaker Chief of Police. Reshuffles between ministries are under the responsibility of the Prime Minister/cabinet members, which mean that these need the approval of the Head of NCPO. These reshuffles are to regain trust and confidence from the people and do not reflect on the performance of the individuals.

o Work group 2: National administration

* After the national administration has been halted for many months causing the disruption of 2014 budget system, people and government agencies have been affected. It is necessary to use the power of a complete government to move forward and ensure that 2015 budget system will not be affected and that Thailand can move ahead towards joining the AEC.

* The NCPO will try and use existing rules and regulations to manage all government agencies unless there are emergencies or problems that need immediate attention. The NCPO will not

order any government agencies to perform illegal activities, or activities that are against the rules. We will only be assigned to a working committee to work alongside those in the agencies to move the work along effectively, quickly, transparently, and regain the trust from the people.

* For those who are concern that the NCPO will be spending national budget unwisely, I would like to reassure you that it is not possible. All financial transactions must strictly adhere to the rules and regulations of each agency. Discussions and enquiries on legality will be made to ensure transparency.

* We will not over spend the national budget. We are in the process of finding out the real figures; those that has been spent and those that have not. We are trying to increase the credibility of national financial system in the eyes of the international community and investors. Thailand is fortunate to have good economic foundation and with good and effective directive, we can become on par with our ASEAN counterparts and future global community.

* 2014 budget begins with;

a) Plans/projects that have been halted and have direct effects on the people and the economy, especially those that involve the basic needs of the people. We began by paying 92,000 million baht to the rice farmers. Some of this amount has already been paid.

b) Plans/projects that have been approved but could not be

carried out due to legal technicality of the previous government. These will be prioritized and carried out as soon as possible, especially those that affects circulating funds, natural disaster funds, and public utilities fund. These funds do not involve a large sum of money or big projects.

c) Big projects with high budgets. These will be considered and studied

carefully. If they will be beneficial then they will be given the go ahead such as the dual-tracks trains, electric trains and other public utilities projects. We will try to use the existing budget for these projects or funds from private investments to reduce the financial burden of loaning the money from outside sources. These will be transparent. Not all projects will be carried out. Every project will begin with integration of all parties to ensure maximum benefit for the agencies and the people. We will not consider projects base of popularity or political reasons like in the past. This will allow us to move forward to 2015 budget which should be under the responsibility of the next government/cabinet before 1 October 2014.

* All financial plans/projects will be carried out similar, or close to, those under the responsibility of the normal government. Emphasis will be placed upon the monitoring system to ensure transparency and fairness.

* Public utilities, waterways management/road constructions or maintenance will be priorities. They will not be a burden to the new government. All parties must cooperate and integrate their efforts.

* We are trying to find measures to fix the prices of agricultural products without bringing more problems like those that happened in the past. Some of these measures include cost reduction such as costs of fertilizers and seedlings, increase productivity while reducing areas being used, employ natural fertilizer and reduce chemical fertilizers, use of local raw materials, and increase product cost and quality in order to compete with other countries.

* At present, NCPO has giving priority to paying the rice farmers. The Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives owes the rice farmers a large sum of money. BAAC is now in the process of trying to solve this problem.

* As for supporting free trades, reduce monopoly effect, establishing central market, price control, and tax increase/reduction, these are under consideration. In addition, special economic zones will be assigned to support small factories along the border and rural areas, and important passes. This is to prevent illegal work force from entering into the country and given more work opportunities to Thai nationals.

* Concerning energy, we are also in the process of considering the measures to oversee energy management. Everything has to be within the rule of law and financial legality. This include establishment of more private funds and large national funds to reduce national spending. As for government enterprises, we will try to modernize them by considering the longevity of national energy source and develop alternative energy sources (wind and solar).

* Boards of government enterprises will have to be restructured to ensure effectiveness, transparency, and good governance.

* In summary, Thailand and the Thai people are still facing many problems that require immediate attention and solutions. In the past, enough time has been wasted through conflicts. It is time for us to move forward for the benefit of our country.

o Roadmap of NCPO

1) Phase 1: The first phase will involve efforts to achieve national reconciliation as soon as possible, 2 to 3 months. In addition to security operations, a reconciliation center will be established for central and rural reforms paving way to the second phase. We will begin in all areas starting from small units, families, and move to villages, sub-districts, districts, provinces. NCPO has assigned the Internal Security Operations Command to be the responsible unit in holding dialogues between all sides to ensure successful second phase. A reform committee will also be set up to pave way for the confrontation free second phase. There are no restructuring of any agencies, requests for monetary payment, or amnesties.

2) Phase 2: The use of temporary constitution which is being drawn up by the legal team. A legislative council will be established to select the Prime Minister, appoint cabinet members to administer the country and write the constitution. A reform council will also be established to resolve the conflicts. This will probably take approximately one year. It could be longer or shorter depending on the situation and cooperation of all sides. If

the situation returns to normal, and a successful reform and national reconciliation and unity have been achieved, we will move to the third and final phrase.

3) Phase 3: A general election under a Democratic system which is legal and accepted by all sides. Our country will have a good and just leader.

* All that I have said will not succeed in time without peace and security. It will not happen if there are still protests without a true understanding of Democracy and the real of our action that we are doing this for the country and the Thai people and that it will be beneficial to the development of the country and our relationship with our allies.

*I think that all of you are feeling like me. For the past nine years I have not been happy. But after the 20th and 22nd May 2014, we have been secured. NCPO does not want power for our own benefits. It was because the country was not able to move forward. If government officials and the military do nothing, who will help Thai people resolve this deadlock when democracy cannot move forward, when there are conflicts, when people do not trust the government, and when the rule of law does not work? Please trust our intentions. We, government officials, civilians, police, and military, must support one another. Our country must come first.

*NCPO understands the concerns of our international friends. We understand that we are living in a democratic world. All we are asking for is to give us time to reform in order to mend our democratic system and making it right, just, responsible, and

beneficial to all people. With everyone's cooperation to help move our country forward, the situation will improve. We believe that you will choose our Kingdom before a flawed democratic system.

* There are many things that we need to do together. None will be achieved if there are still protests, or resistance. Please give us time to resolve the problems. After we have achieved our mission, the military will go back to our duties and look after the country and the people, and to ensure long lasting happiness and prosperity. All in accordance with the directive given by His Majesty the King.

Thank you.