

Plan for food, energy in the works

Safeguard measures 'due next Friday'

MONGKOL BANGPRAPA

The government expects to have a plan ready by next Friday to safeguard the country's food and energy security due to threats posed by the economic impact of Covid-19 coupled with the Russia-Ukraine crisis, the National Security Council (NSC) said yesterday.

NSC secretary-general Supoj Malaniyom has been asked by Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to take charge of brainstorming efforts to find ways of better mitigating the impact of these crises.

They have been driving up inflation and consumer product and energy prices, which are being handled by the government's economic organisations, he said.

"What Gen Prayut is more concerned about, however, is the long-term impact of these negative factors on Thailand's food and energy security," added Gen Supoj.

Input received from previous

meetings with those economic organisations is being compiled and turned into a plan to be implemented in various stages, he noted.

In the short term, the plan will focus on inflation and the risk of encountering an economic slowdown or even a new recession, which will inevitably affect Thailand's energy and food security, he said, adding this is due to be finalised by the end of next week.

Since this area mainly involves two parties — business operators and consumers — the government will also seek the cooperation of the private sector, Gen Supoj said.

"Why does this concern the NSC?" he asked. "Because whatever affects national security concerns the NSC."

A sub-committee will be formed to follow up on this work and prepare a proposal to submit to the government regarding what action is required.

Meanwhile, government spokesman Thanakorn Wangboonkongchana relayed a message from Gen Prayut to the public.

He said the PM insisted there has not been any shrinkage in the number of inter-provincial bus services in operation, and the Ministry of Transport is negotiating with operators to prevent

any future disruptions in this area.

In case the negotiations end in a stalemate, and the operators go ahead with their threats to reduce their services due to the high energy prices, Transport Co and the State Railway of Thailand will promptly implement contingency plans to cope with the impact of the scaled-back service, Mr Thanakorn said.

A total of 27 operators that hold a concession to jointly operate inter-provincial bus services on all 143 routes nationwide previously threatened to slash their services by up to 80%, citing a need to adjust to rising oil prices.

NSC prepares fresh peace plan in South

Chief dismisses 'old' Thaksin proposals

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National Security Council (NSC) chief, Supoj Malaniyom, said a new plan to solve the conflict in the deep South will be launched next year while dismissing proposals from ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra as nothing new.

Gen Supoj said the NSC has tried finding ways to end the southern unrest for almost 20 years.

"What the government is trying to do now is the best approach. The government is trying to put in place sustainable solutions, uphold territorial integrity and ensure harmony among religions. This is in line with the constitution and this is clearly the government's policy," Gen Supoj said.

Regarding Thaksin's proposals including one to designate the three southern border provinces — Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat — as a special administrative zone, Gen Supoj said: "Anyone can propose anything. But we've already thought of it."

He said that the agency is finalising details of a new plan to end the unrest from 2023-2027, and when the cabinet approves it, details will be given.

"It takes into account all dimensions of the problem and we have chosen the best solutions," Gen Supoj said.

Refuting Thaksin's criticism that huge amounts of money have been spent on failed attempts to restore peace, Gen Supoj said budget planning was well thought-out and when obstacles emerge, it is subject to review. He said the government is still working with Malaysia to tackle the southern problem.

On Sunday, Thaksin took part in an online seminar organised by The Motive, a media and civic organisation based in the deep South.

Thaksin said that hundreds of billions of baht have been spent on military operations in the South but no desirable results have been achieved while many soldiers have lost their lives on duty.

Money should be spent on development with participation from all sectors, he said while also proposing that the region be designated a special administrative zone.

"If all sides sit down for talks and put less emphasis on the security side of the issue and focus more on economic development and improving education, I believe people in the three southern border provinces will be happy and have a better future," Thaksin said.