

Power-plant opponents to keep up fight

DEMONSTRATIONS TO
CONTINUE IN CAPITAL
UNTIL THE PROJECTS
ARE CALLED OFF

PRATCH RUJIVANAROM
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OPPONENTS of coal-fired power plants have vowed to fight on after the Metropolitan Police designated a protest ban within a 50-metre radius of Government House, forcing the demonstrators to end their prolonged protest in front of the premises.

Coal-fired power plant opposition groups yesterday insisted on their rights to stage peaceful protests and said they would appeal to the police against the order.

They also vowed to carry on holding demonstrations in Bangkok until the government permanently cancels the Krabi and Thepa coal-fired power plant projects.

The Network of Songkhla-Pattani Residents Against Coal-Fired Power Plants, along with the Save Andaman from Coal group, have staged a peaceful demonstration on the pavement opposite Government House for 12 days. Their aim is to urge Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-o-cha to permanently cancel proposed coal-fired power plant projects in the South.

A representative for the protesters, Matthayom Chaitem, said the ban around Government House signalled that the government did not care about the burdens of citizens and had used the law to drive people away.

Matthayom insisted that their

protest was peaceful and legal, so they would appeal against the ban. He also emphasised that the coal-fired power plant opposition groups would not stop protesting.

If the police did not allow them to stage a protest near Government House, they would find a new venue to continue their campaign.

"We gather in front of Government House because the Prime Minister's office is here, and we want the PM to listen to our problems and concerns," Matthayom said.

"We insist that we will not stop protesting until the government accepts our demand to [permanently] abandon all coal-fired power plant projects."

The Metropolitan Police issued an announcement on Friday evening implementing the no-protest zone within a 50-metre perimeter around Government House.

They cited the authority designated to police as per Article 7 of the Public Gathering Act.

In interest of public safety

The Metropolitan Police Bureau also said that the increasing number of protesters in front of Government House had crowded the footpath on Phitsanulok Road, causing difficulties and danger to pedestrians and affecting traffic on the road. Therefore, the police had acted to maintain public safety and social stability.

According to the announcement, those who violate the order will be considered in breach of Articles 24 and 25 of the Public Gathering Act and would be subject to punishment of up to three years in jail and/or a Bt60,000 fine.

The protesters have 15 days to appeal the order.