

*(unofficial translation by Office of the Prime Minister)*

**Speech by**  
**His Excellency Prayut Chan-o-cha,**  
**Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand**  
**National Agenda on “Preventing Human Trafficking”**  
**3 April 2015 at 1400 hrs.**  
**Santi Maitree Building, Government House.**

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General Prawit Wongsuwan,  
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence,  
Deputy Prime Ministers and Ministers,  
Permanent Secretaries, Heads of Government Agencies,  
Distinguished guests,  
All Thai citizens,

I would like to thank you all for taking the time to attend this event for disseminating government policy in preventing and suppressing human trafficking today. I would also like to also thank General Prawit Wongsuwan, Deputy Chairperson of the Policy Committee and Chair of Sub-committee on Suppression of Trafficking in Persons, who has served as the main policy driver in the acceleration of preparations of strategies, measures, and practices to address the issue of human trafficking as a whole, to the extent that the Royal Thai Government has been able to declare this issue as a national agenda.

The announcement that the prevention and suppression of human trafficking is now a national agenda for Thailand implies that everyone who has come here today, including those who have not been able to attend, must perform their respective duties in order to seriously resolve the problem of human trafficking in Thailand. Those who still wish to exploit others, no matter in what form, including government officials who have colluded with you instead of doing your duty to serve the people, I wish to declare that these people must no longer have any room to exist in Thai society.

I am sure that everyone is aware that the problems associated with human trafficking in various forms such as child labour, prostitution, beggars and forced labour, such as in fishing industry, have long persisted in Thailand. Thailand is seen as the country of origin, transit and destination for human trafficking for a long time. Many countries have kept an eye on us for more than 10 years already because they think that we are not trying hard enough to tackle human trafficking seriously and systematically. There have been too little penalties for officials who have exploited both Thai and foreign labours, but only minimal disciplinary actions without the use of any evidence that could lead to criminal prosecutions. We must accept that previously, a key aspect of the human trafficking problem has been the involvement of government officials or employees of the government who have abused their authorities. As well, Thai society has encountered the problem of influential figures who have exploited others profusely.

At the moment, some of our children have exhibited a worrying way of thinking, such as believing that prostitution is not an immoral or damaging issue, or that forced labour with lowest wages without any benefits is an acceptable arrangement. This thinking alludes to the acceptance of illegalities and the disrespect for the human rights of others.

Human Trafficking is a problem that is very close to us all, no matter where you live, or what background you come from. Everyday this problem has manifested into our lives in way that you may not have

imagined, for example beggar gangs who kidnap children and force them to beg for money, or force children to work in any kind of conditions, all of which is illegal. I would like to stress that all of you should have a common understanding of the significance of human trafficking. According to The Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act B.E 2551 (2008) the word “Human Trafficking” means “business for the purpose of exploitation, which includes the acts of: procuring, buying, selling, vending, transporting, detaining or confining, harboring, or receiving any person by means of threat or use of force, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power, or the giving money or benefits to achieve consent from the legal guardian of a person in order to gain control over them in allowing the offender to exploit the person under his control.”

Why is this government so serious about this problem? I would like to inform you that this matter is about the fundamentals of having a conscience, a sense of justice, and morality. It is about respecting the principle that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and with rights. If Thailand is to be viewed a society with compassion and progress, then human trafficking should not be happening in this country. Some selfish people work to put their personal interests first while destroying the country's reputation. This has had a disastrous effect on both the county's image and economic performance, for example there are companies that still use forced labour in fisheries, thus resulting in such news being reported globally.

In fact, I'm aware that all relevant government agencies are not negligent and are trying to solve the problem seriously and continuously. I believe that everyone here knows very well that we hadn't been doing enough, given that there are still some problems such as legal issues that have prevented your ability to perform your duties to the fullest. Honest officials, who have been trying to do their job, have not been protected by the law, thus allowing them to be in a vulnerable position against influential figures. As well I believe that you all know that previously, many government agencies have been working with a routine disposition while not being proactive enough to handle the problem on a regular

basis. This is no longer acceptable. Combating human trafficking is an issue that warrants continued efforts and commitment.

This government has expedited the issuance of ministerial regulations and other legislations to facilitate all your work, such as the approval of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act 2551 by the NLA on 26 March 2015. Why do we need to adjust such legal measures? I urge you all to go and study the rules of each ministry that have hindered progress, such as what has occurred at the Ministry of Labour. I hope that from now on, we will have no excuses and all government agencies can work together systematically. And I wish that everyone can help solve the problem at the source, and see the causes of human trafficking in terms of supply and demand, such as Thai workers being forced labour overseas and foreign labourers forced to work in Thailand. It does not matter if these people consented to these arrangements initially – they have become victims of human trafficking. Therefore we need to think about how to solve these problems systematically.

Since the NCPO and this government have come to administer the country, we have recognized the importance of controlling the issue of labour in the country, especially alien labourers from 3 nationalities. We have thus issued an order to organize alien labourers to be registered, including those in the fishing sector. This is often seen as a weakness of Thailand's, thus making our country prone to condemnation both in the areas of Trafficking in Persons (TIP), and in illegal, unregulated, and unreported fishing (IUU). The government has since registered more than 1.6 million alien labours.

I and my ministers have attached high priority to the issue of handling human-trafficking in a continuous way. If you have followed the news you will know I have emphasized this issue in every related meeting, such as in Cabinet, and that have informed the public through my Friday programme. All this has been for sending a message to government agencies and those who still wish to exploit others, for example, entertainment spots that remain open after hours, prostitution rings, and child labour in factories, even those that are considered as

relatives, not to mention beggars. These examples have been common in Thailand, especially in tourist areas. Some people even think that this is selling point for tourism but actual fact it is a serious problem for Thailand. Thailand has other more genuine tourist attractions, and prostitution is not one of them.

Illegal Unreported and Unregulated Fishing is one of the worst things. It aims at private profit at the expense of human rights, with complete disregard for the country's image. I have ordered all related agencies to travel to Indonesia to bring Thai labourers back. However that is not enough. We also have to arrange a fishing system to be on par with international standards. The government is comprehensively handling this issue, not only in the fishing sector, but we are trying to tackle it in all areas of the economy and society. We are also trying to resolve issues related to human trafficking such as corruption and child pornography, which has included a revision of child pornography laws already considered by National Legislative Assembly.

Thailand has long suffered from this problem. Today, the government wishes to resolve these problems, without any vested interests. If there is anyone in my Cabinet who is found to have been involved with human trafficking, please inform me. I will not let this slip. This government is doing its best for the country, based on the vision of stability, prosperity and sustainability in accordance with His Majesty the King's philosophy of sufficiency economy. Therefore I ask for cooperation from all of you as public servants to do your best for the people. I also ask you to take action against public servants who continue to take advantage of the people in this way.

Today, the government has clearly announced its National Agenda. All government sectors must now tackle the problem of human-trafficking to the best of their abilities. We will take care of every worker in Thailand, regardless of their nationality. Along with this, government agencies must collaborate more. From now on, you all have to clean up your own houses and I believe that senior officials do understand. But you also have to supervise your subordinates, especially

those who work close to the people. Some entrepreneurs will offer a bribe for convenience which will lead to a plethora or other problems that come with human trafficking. I repeat that this problem needs to be tackled, and government officers and entrepreneurs who break the law must be punished.

Today I have brought together the key senior government officials are related to our efforts in suppressing human-trafficking, child labour, forced labour, and illegal unreported and unregulated fishing, and have also set a clear policy direction. Therefore if all of us help to resolve this problem, I believe that we will accomplish our goals. However if we don't help each other and treat this issue without a sense of urgency or just wait until it passes over, then we will be nothing more than a burden to the country and then we shall have to firmly deal with those who have committed these illegalities. I would like to ask all of Thai society to be aware of this problem of human trafficking, so that we can bring charges against all offenders backed with factual evidence. If government officers are found to be neglecting their duties, we shall quickly relocate them and deal with them firmly. We shall also be looking into your past actions to see if you have been involved with any human trafficking. We will also make use of available smart technology to look for offenders, and then inflict penalties and punishments resolutely. Society must also keep a watchful eye on this situation. In this sense I therefore urge all of you try to do your best in your responsibilities. If any of the divisions including Department of Fisheries in collaboration with Ministry of Labour, Marine Department, Department of Provincial Administration, Marine Police Division, Thailand Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center, Ministry of Employment, and Department of Labour Protection and Welfare neglect their duties; then all divisions must take responsibility for their action. Because today, we have organized the system to be more integrated and so every unit and agency will need to cooperate. It may be possible to avoid some duties by saying it is another agencies responsibility, but whether this will be feasible will a

Police and immigration officers are in the frontline, so we ask that you work and collaborate with one another. The laws would be useless if

they are not being enforced. There's a saying that "a Thai prison is for poor people". I ask that we not accept things like this, as a Thai prison is for those who commit a crime whether they are rich or poor. I need all of your help involved with this process to carry out your duties properly, without prejudice and bias. Presently, I have heard that there are police officers in some areas who do not even know how to communicate with the victim of human trafficking and some even think that the sufferers deserve to be the victims. You must not think that way.

From the Department of Fisheries at the central government level, to Provincial Fishery Offices, everyone needs to work harder to work this issue through. For example, the Department of Fisheries can collaborate more with the Foreign Ministry to negotiate with our neighboring countries, especially Indonesia, so that there are collaborative efforts to tackle issues in the fishing industry; making things legal, while ensuring not to take advantage of others; create a sustainable fishing industry, take responsibility for our actions towards the environment and our human fellows. In addition, owners of fishing boats should also receive training on how to improve best practices and labour welfare such as inspecting fishing boats on a regular basis with government related agencies. It is important to take this practice seriously, and it shouldn't be the case that inspections always go smoothly on our part, but when foreign media come to our home and inspect fishing boats, they find many boats that commit illegal acts more than we do. We must help one another in implementing our work. Those who commit a crime must be prosecuted.

I have been informed that the Department of Fisheries in collaboration with Ministry of Labour, Marine Department, Department of Provincial Administration, Marine Police Division, Thailand Maritime Enforcement Coordinating Center, Ministry of Employment, and Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, are trying to speed up the process to set up a control center to monitor the movement of each fishing boat. In addition, a database of fishing boats and fishing labourers are also currently being developed so that such information can be used towards our efforts with boat inspections. I ask that all

officials carry out this order and implement such practices at the policy level and at all divisions. All provinces must have a common understanding of what needs be done from now on. The Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Ministry of Labour, Department of Provincial Administration, Marine Department, Marine Police Division, all of you have the responsibility to work collaboratively, and eliminate the problem of human trafficking in fishing industry to be gone as soon as possible.

Supporting units such as the Ministry of Social Development must help out and support social workers and psychologist in protecting and rehabilitating victims of human trafficking. There needs to be a system of care that encompasses both mental and physical health, which helps with the restoration of the self-esteem of victims, so that they are able to cooperate with the prosecution process, and so that they can return back to society and live a normal life, with a job and income, and with the integrity of being a human being with stability and sustainability.

The Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Industry must be strict in inspecting labour forces, not allowing them to have both illegal and legal workers, especially women and children who have fallen into the victims of human trafficking in places such as factories and other establishments.

As well, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs must also be another supporting unit that cooperates with other government agencies, such as Ministry of Labour, to take care of Thai citizens and Thai labourers abroad. Even on the issue of Thai translators - do not let our people find illegal translators as has happened in the past, since cases going through a judicial process require translators to be present in the courts. If the translator is illegal or practices without a license, then the person is not allowed in a court and would not gain acceptance internationally. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is not only responsible for maintaining good relations between countries, but also to take care of Thai citizens abroad as best as they can. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is also responsible for conventions that Thailand signs with other countries, which means



that we must be able to do what we say, and not merely state our intentions without any real action.

For other agencies in the judicial process, especially the office of the prosecutor, you must also help with the work of the Department of Special Investigation and other police investigations. I ask that all of you take part in the process and think of it as your responsibility to give guidance to one another to enforce the laws effectively. We must work as friends and colleagues in the judicial process, and work as the government's attorney to help out in the investigations for the victims of human trafficking.

The Anti-Money Laundering Office must play a role and perform their duties in the confiscation of money of perpetrators of illegal acts, which includes investor networks, so that they would not return to commit these crimes again. Do not assume that human trafficking cases do not amount to much, as you may not be able to confiscate a lot of financial assets, but please consider how it is a crime that often involves a transnational element and may even relate to illegal arms and narcotics trade, and in this case may lead to a lot more financial transactions than the arms trade.

Though today some of you might think that the level of severity of human trafficking in Thailand is not linked to international crime networks, but according to statistics a number of Thai citizens have fallen into victims of trafficking abroad. In some cases victims from trafficking are not Thai but pass Thailand for transit to third country. This is a sign of international network of human trafficking. Therefore I don't want us to be careless. Other countries think of Thailand as the country of origin, transit country and destination country for trafficking. If we don't solve this problem seriously, the problem of human trafficking will be more complicated when Thailand enters into the ASEAN Community and by then it may be already too late. Therefore we must all really work together from now onwards to proceed with criminal cases and financial transactions from human trafficking in order to eliminate the problem from our future.

In conclusion, today, I have clearly announce this National Agenda and provided you with a clear policy direction. Therefore every sector should urge your respective authorities to deal with the problem of human trafficking strictly and seriously. There will be no more excuses. I also urge every minister to monitor the situation, especially the Minister of Interior who oversees the provincial governors and local administrations throughout the country.

Please inform Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense ( General Prawit Wongsuwon) , as the chairperson of the prevention and suppression of human trafficking sub-committee, if you know of any government agency that does not cooperate, neglect this problem, or allows any obstruction of justice by influential persons in the local area. I would like to see everyone working together and resolutely on this matter.

In any case I would like to stress that we should not be looking to find fault with one another when we should be working together. Anything that cannot be complete, then try to support each other and advise each other. We must respect to each other. But if we learn of some group that is going to break the law, we must remind them and if they are found guilty then they will have to be punished in accordance with the law. We must not try to take care of one another after we break the law or help each other to avoid the law.

Preventing and suppressing human trafficking and helping the victims from human trafficking are not easy and could not be done by an individual or only one agency. So I would like to ask everyone to work together harmoniously. If only one member of the team stumbles, the whole process, including victim or witness, will be affected. Every profession, such as lawyers, social workers and psychologist, are important but the most important is their attitudes toward helping others. The problem of human trafficking today is becoming much more complicated in terms of procedures and networking, so we will always need to find new approaches and techniques to solving and eliminating this problem more efficiently.

Finally, I would like to encourage all officials who are working on this task to work together to bring back decency and justice to our society, especially to protect and prevent innocent people from human trafficking. With this common conviction therefore, I believe every agency involved will be able to achieve their goals.

I would like to thank every Deputy Prime Minister, Minister, Permanent Secretary, Head of Government Agency, and Head of Provincial Agency and ask that the Triple Gems and all things sacred, along with the graciousness of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen protect and guide you all to have unwavering commitment to serve your country for the future of our children.

Thank you very much.

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