

Be decisive on reshuffle: Abhisit

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DEMOCRAT Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva yesterday urged Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha to be decisive about a Cabinet reshuffle, saying indecision could have negative repercussions.

He said the PM must make a decision on whether there should be a Cabinet change and focus on efficiency. The lack of purchasing power in rural areas was a major problem. Economic policies should aim to boost people's purchasing power, especially farmers hit by drought, he said. "This would help support and sustain the country's economy at times when external factors are not favourable for domestic growth."

He suggested that the government give compensation to farmers forced to delay farming because of the drought.

Meanwhile, deputy government spokesman Maj-General Sansern Kaewkamnerd said reports of a Cabinet reshuffle were leaked by ill-intentioned groups who have ulterior motives to rock business confidence.

"Several ministers have already denied the reports, saying the decision depends on the PM but such reports have been continuously released. This makes us believe that whoever leaked the news wants to destroy the confidence of investors," Sansern said.

He urged reporters to exercise their judgement in reporting news from some sources to prevent public confusion and panic. He doubted that people in the government or the National Council for Peace and Order could have leaked such news.

"Why would they want to cause public fear and confusion?" he asked. Security officials were

checking who was behind talk of a Cabinet reshuffle, he said.

Former Pheu Thai MP Phongthep Thepkanchana denied that he was one of the former government leaders who would join the new Cabinet, saying he had no idea about the move.

Meanwhile, 56 per cent of people surveyed by Bangkok Poll agreed with the idea of setting up a national government, reasoning that the country is not ready in terms of reform and reconciliation and there could be more political conflict if a general election is held now.

About 35 per cent believed only a general election could resolve conflicts while eight per cent were not sure.

Of all parts of the country, the southern region was the most receptive to the idea of setting up a national government with 62 per cent backing the idea and 31 per cent disapproving. In the central region, 60 per cent supported the idea, while 26 per cent disagreed and 12 per cent were not certain. In the eastern region, 59 per cent supported the idea and 35 per cent disagreed, while 4 per cent were not sure.

In Bangkok, 55 per cent supported a national government, 36 per cent disapproved, and 7 per cent said they were not sure.

In the Northeast, 53 per cent supported the proposal for a national government, 35 per cent opposed the idea and 10 per cent said they were not certain. In the North, 53 per cent agreed with the idea, 40 per cent disagreed, while 5 per cent said there were unsure. In the suburbs, fewer people – about 50 per cent – backed the idea, while 46 per cent disapproved and 3 per cent said they were not certain.