

Thailand: Student demonstrations continue for a 10th day

Thursday 5 March 2020, by [PRACHATAI](#) (Date first published: 4 March 2020).

The wave of student demonstrations which began on 21 February has now been continuing for 10 days as more universities and high schools organize their own rallies amidst fear of COVID-19 and as students in many universities go into their mid-term examination period.



A bird-eye view of the demonstration at Ramkhamhaeng University on 27 February showing the thousands of protestors filling the plaza.

The demonstration at Ramkhamhaeng University on 27 February.

In the evening of last Thursday (27 February), students and members of the public gathered at Ramkhamhaeng University in a call for justice and democracy, hanging a banner from the Faculty of Law building and giving speeches which touched on everything from parliamentary politics to the deaths of Abdullah Isomuso and Chaiyaphum Pasae.

Sukriffee Lateh, President of the Federation of Patani Students and Youth (PerMAS), gave a speech during the demonstration and said that he would like society to know that, without democracy and without respect for the people's rights and freedoms, peace in the Deep South will never be achieved.

"Many times, during student demonstrations both in Bangkok and in the southern border provinces, they are pressured and intimidated by the authorities, which reduced the space for the people's expression," he said.

Three third-year students from Ramkhamhaeng University's Faculty of Mass Communication said that this is their first time to join a political demonstration, and that they were at the rally because they can no longer put up with the situation in the country and with the deteriorating economic situation. They also said that they liked the fact that so many people joined the protest, and that there are so many people who feel the same way.

A picture of the demonstration at Ramkhamhaeng University, with one of the protestors carrying a styrofoam model of the missing People's Party Plague about the size of his torso.



One of the protestors at Ramkhamhaeng University carries a model of the missing People's Party Plaque on his back.

During the rally, two speakers rang small bells onstage— a reference to the legend that “Pho-khun” or King Ramkhamhaeng had a bell put up in front of his palace for his people to ring when they had a problem, which he would then personally deal with - and said “this is not us calling for help from Pho-khun, but this is a signal that Ramkhamhaeng students will no longer do nothing.”

A picture showing the lights from the phones used by the protestors at Thammasat University Lampang with the protestors' shadowy figures in the background.



Protestors at Thammasat University's Lampang Campus used the flashlight on their phones in place of candles.

On the same day at Thammasat University's Lampang Campus, around 500 people joined a demonstration in which representatives of the students gave speeches about the government and other social issues, saying that “we will be back when there is no justice.”

At the Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna, around 100 students joined a flash mob calling for the dissolution of parliament and the resignation of Prime Minister Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha. There was a poetry reading, and the protestors sang “Do You Hear the People Sing?” - by now a popular protest song - while turning on the flashlights on their phones.

According to iLaw, around 20 plainclothes police officers were observing and taking photographs and videos of the protests, as well as university staff and security personnel.

Student representatives from Chiang Mai University also joined the protest, and the organizers announced that there will be another demonstration soon at Chiang Mai University.

At the Prince of Songkla University's Surat Thani Campus, around 50 students and members of the public gathered for a demonstration, surrounded by 10 plainclothes police officers, who took pictures of the protestors and asked the organizers for their names and phone numbers.

Other demonstrations also took place on the same day at Maha Sarakham University, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Rangsit University, Phetchabun Rajabhat University, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, Rajamangala University of Technology Isan's Surin Campus, Nakhon Pathom Rajabhat University, Kasetsart University's Kamphaeng Saen Campus, and oei

Rajabhat University.



A picture of the demonstration at Mae Fah Luang University showing the protestors doing the three-finger salute

Protestors at Mae Fah Luang University doing the three-finger salute during the demonstration.

On Friday (28 February), thousands of students at Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai participated in a demonstration, one of around nine taking place on the same day. Most of the protestors wore black and gave the three-finger salute during the demonstration, where they sang Jin Kammachon's song "Phuea Muan Chon" ("For the People").

Meanwhile, over a hundred students joined a demonstration at the Chaiyaphum Rajabhat University, shouting "Dictatorship shall perish! Democracy shall prosper!"

A picture of the demonstration at Phayao University after dark, showing the large group of protestors sitting on the ground with protest signs in front of them.



The demonstration at the University of Phayao

At the University of Phayao, around one thousand students attended a rally, where they lit candles and sang Chiranan Pitpreecha's "Flowers Will Bloom." Student representatives gave speeches calling for the resignation of the cabinet, before the rally closed at around 21:00.

Thammanat Prompow, one of the ministers against whom a motion of no-confidence was filed, is the MP for Phayao's Constituency 1, where the university is located.

At the Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University, a small group of students also got together for an anti-government demonstration, which was closely observed by around 10 plainclothes police officers.

A picture of the demonstration at the Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University showing around 20 protestors sitting on the ground, surrounded by plainclothes officers and members of the public.



The demonstration at Nakhon Si Thammarat Rajabhat University.

In Chantaburi, more than a thousand people gathered for a demonstration at Thung Na Choei Park. The rally was attended by both students and members of the public, but it was organized by students (name and institution withheld) who said that they previously planned to organize the rally inside their institution, but the administrators refused. Instead, they requested to use the municipal office's space and requested to use speakers, to which the municipal office agreed for a fee of 10 baht.

The group then went to the police prior to the rally, but because the police asked for their names for the notification of their rally, they decided not to give notification as they are concerned about legal prosecution.

A wide shot of the demonstration at Thung Na Choei Park in Chantaburi after dark, showing the protestors holding up their phones with the flashlight turned on.



Protestors at Thung Na Choei Park using the flashlight on their phones in place of candles.

The organizers said that, after the rally, a police officer came to tell them that they had violated the Public Assembly Act because they did not notify the authorities about their rally, and that they did not comply with an officer's order. The officer told them that they would be fined 20,000 baht, the highest amount allowed, but members of the public who were participating in the demonstration helped negotiate with the officer to reduce the fine to 5000 baht. The participants also raised money among themselves to pay for the fine on behalf of the organizers.

The organizers also said that students from a girls' school were attending the event, and had told them that they were warned by their teachers not to come, and that while they are at the event, they were photographed and told that the photographs will be send to their school so that their teachers can take off their discipline points.

A wide shot of the demonstration at Kasetsart University early in the evening, showing a large group of participants gathering in front of the university auditorium.



The demonstration at Kasetsart University early in the evening of 29 February (Photo by Kotcharak Kaewsurach)

A mass demonstration was held at Kasetsart University on Saturday evening (29 February), which was the second demonstration held at Kasetsart University's main campus at Bang Khen after the demonstration on 24 February. The demonstration was joined by both students from Kasetsart University and other institutions, including Mahidol University and Ramkhamhaeng University, as well as members of the public.

Representatives of students from several universities gave speeches and held an "outside of parliament" no-confidence debate against the Prayut cabinet.

A fourth-year student from Kasetsart University gave a speech saying that the rally is the people's battle for democracy, but that it will be difficult to reach their goals. He said that they have had to put up with oppression under a dictatorship and with various laws written by the NCPO, and that they have to live under a constitution which was passed under "the dirtiest referendum ever."

He then called for people who are still on social media to come out and join the students, and that "if we can get 10 million people, I believe we can end the dictatorship once and for all."

A picture of the demonstration at Kasetsart University. In the foreground is the hand of a protestor doing the three-finger salute. The crowd is seen in the background with many also doing the three-finger salute.



Protestors at Kasetsart University doing the three-finger salute.

Meanwhile, at the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), a small group of graduate students organized their own rally, joined by around 20 people who were observed by both plainclothes and uniformed police officers.

On Sunday (1 March), a group of students gathered at the Suan Tunthiang Park in Trang for an anti-government protest, which was joined by both high school students and students from Prince of Songkla University's Trang Campus. The protestors gave the three-finger salute and called for the resignation of Gen Prayut.

In Bangkok, a group of activists and human rights defenders met at the Ratchaprasong Intersection for a demonstration in which they called for Gen Prayut to resign and speak out against the state authorities' use of information operations (IO) to intimidate members of the public and human rights

defenders.

The demonstration was observed by police officers from Lumpini Police Station, and there was a COVID-19 checkpoint set up by public health officers around the rally area.

Protestors standing at the Ratchaprasong Intersection doing the three-finger salute with the LGBT rainbow flag behind them.



Protestors at Ratchaprasong Intersection doing the three-finger salute (Picture from iLaw)

At Naresuan University, around a thousand students gathered for a demonstration, where they wrote their thoughts about various social issues and government policies on pieces of paper and gave speeches.

Another demonstration was scheduled for Monday (2 March) at the Suankularb Wittayalai Nonthaburi School, but was cancelled after the school administrators refused to let the students hold a demonstration on school grounds. After the students went to the police to notify them about their rally, they were told that a rally in front of the school might be in breach of the Public Assembly Act, Section 8, which prohibits assemblies that obstruct the entrance to an educational institution, so they withdrew their notification.

Overseas Thai students have also organized their own rallies. On Saturday (29 February), a group of Thai students in London met at SOAS, University of London to stage a demonstration in solidarity with students in Thailand

Thai students in Scotland protesting in Edinburgh, all wearing dark jackets and holding protest signs above their head.



The demonstration in Edinburgh, Scotland

In Scotland, on Sunday (1 March), a group of Thai students staged a small demonstration in Edinburgh near the Adam Smith statue on the Royal Mile, later moving to an area close to St Giles Cathedral due to the strong wind and low temperature.

“The atrocities that’ve been happening in Thailand, it’s now too much,” a student said. “I would like to quote an opposition politician, that for a dictatorship, not only that we cannot trust them, but we should not even forgive them.”

A protest sign written on cardboard with the message “Not just no confidence but no forgiveness too” being held by a pair of hands wearing dark gloves.

A sign held by a protestor at the demonstration in Edinburgh, Scotland bearing a quote from opposition MP Wiroj Lakkhanaadisorn.

Meanwhile, 200 faculty members from various educational institutions all over the country issued a statement in support of the students and asking university administrators not to impede the students’ freedom of expression and not to assist the authorities who may try to use legal measures against the students.

In support of the students, the following bands have also announced that they will perform at any student demonstration free of charge: Rap Against Dictatorship, who is becoming a fixture at many student rallies, the reggae group Srirajah Rockers, and Taitosmith.

Prachatai

P.S.

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