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Boonrawd: Attacks in Bangkok possible

(bangkokpost.com, TNA)

Defence Minister Boonrawd Somtas warned Thursday that Muslim insurgents from the deep South might expand their attacks to Bangkok.

Gen Boonrawd said the ministry discovered that insurgents were wandering around universities in the capital.

"It is possible that the insurgents will expand their attacks to Bangkok, because we have learned of their movements in various universities where they conceal themselves in uniforms of students," he said, adding that it was difficult for authorities to differentiate between the separatists and innocent people 100 per cent.

The Special Branch police unit had earlier said it was closely monitoring Muslim student groups in Bangkok.

Gen Boonrawd added that curfew might be imposed in the southernmost provinces if necessary. However, he said the decision had to be done carefully as this might have an impact on the economics and credibility of the country.

Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont on Thursday pledged that the government would attempt to the utmost to prevent insurgent violence now commonplace in the deep South from spilling over into the Bangkok metropolis.

Speaking at the "Prime Minister Meets the Press" programme at Government House, he conceded that the Internal Security Operations Command (ISOC) is concerned about the possible spillover of the southern violence into the capital.

However, the government would try its best to end the southern unrest as soon as possible and to curb any spread into the metropolitan area.

Meanwhile, Bangkok Governor Apirak Kosayodhin told the Bangkokians not to panick following Gen Boonrawd's remarks because there was no official confirmation that insurgents would stage violent activities in the capital.

Mr Apirak added that security in Bangkok have already been stepped up.

As a preemptive measure, the Mass Rapid Transit Authority of Thailand (MRTA) and Bangkok Metro have also sought public cooperation to have purses, parcels and other carry-on baggage

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examined before entering an electric train station.

To step up security measures, both organisations in a joint statement asked for cooperation and understanding from passengers to allow security staff to check their packages and other belongings to prevent possible bombings on trains.

Such action is taken in line with the international standard security practice to ensure all passengers get maximum safety protection abroad Bangkok trains.

Passengers have been also asked not to seal their packages tightly so that security staff could open them conveniently.

Both organisations said they reserved the right to not provide service to passengers not cooperating with the measures.

They also suspended staircase and elevator services temporarily to ensure that all passengers walk through checkpoints.

In an attempt to brace for possible insurgent attacks, the Transport Ministry had recently instructed state agencies responsible for public transport nationwide to step up security measures at all transport stations.

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