

Former communists get final payouts, many claims unsettled

written by กองบรรณาธิการ | June 29, 2017

NAKHON PHANOM - At a military camp in Nakhon Phanom Province last week, the government promised to make payments to former members of Thailand's now defunct Communist party as part of an amnesty deal that helped resolving years of violent conflict in the 1980s.

But groups representing former comrades in the Northeast say that many of them were excluded from the state's final payouts that are supposed to complete a policy initiated 35 years ago.



On July 21, 287 former members of the Communist Party Thailand gather at the military's 3rd Infantry Battalion Phrayod Muang Khwang Camp in Nakhon Phanom Province.

Last Wednesday, more than 6,000 ex-members of the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) flocked to military bases across the country to collect bank account books handed out by the government that promises to transfer 225,000 baht (about \$6,600) to each person. Overall, a budget of 1.4 billion baht (about \$41.2 million) will be spent.

“We’ve waited for a very long time. The government is finally fulfilling the promise it made when we left the forests,” says 69-year-old Bunta Srisomkham, or Comrade Prayong, one of almost 300 former Communist fighters at the event in Nakhon Phanom.

In the Northeast, 1,365 former CPT members in the provinces of Nakhon Ratchasima, Udon Thani, Nakhon Phanom, and Mukdahan, qualified to receive a total amount of over 307 million baht (about \$9 million) after they passed the government’s qualification process.

“Many of those who finally got money today were not included in past years’ payments,” says Don Setrit, the leader of a group representing former CPT members in the province. “We had to fight for the money,” he adds.

Since 1982, different governments made several rounds of payouts to former CPT members, the latest in 2009 under the Abhisit Vejjajiva Government. The amount per head was set at 225,000 baht, the equivalent of five rai and five cows which was the original compensation negotiated by the CPT.

By 2015, the government had handed out payments to 13,060 people nationwide, according to information of the Internal Security Operations Command.



Many former members of the Communist insurgency in the Northeast have not received government compensation yet claims Don Setrit, who represents a group of ex-CPT members in Nakhon Phanom Province.

For the final round of payouts, the government set seven conditions for applicants. Among those conditions are that applicants had to be born before 1967, have a low income, and had to have joined a re-education session of the Karunyathep Project.

But many former communist resistance fighters in the Northeast claim they deserve compensation but have still not received any money.

“The government’s conditions have caused up to 70,000 comrades in the Northeast to be excluded from those eligible for the payouts,” claims 59-year-old Aphinan Jansaman, the leader of group of former CPT members in Ubon Ratchathani.

The group argues that the government’s birth date condition is unfair because many of them joined the armed rebellion before they were adults. But the government says these conditions are necessary to prevent imposters from falsely claiming benefits.

In the late 1970s, there was an estimated number of 12,000 armed CPT fighters nationwide. But the communist rebellion faltered when the Chinese government withdrew its support.

Thousands of CPT fighters and their families surrendered when the Thai government announced a general amnesty and promised to provide financial assistance in the early 1980s.



Bunta Srisomkham, or Comrade Prayong, who joined the event in Nakhon Phanom, said he will spend the money to support the rice farming of his children.

