

# King moves to prevent hailstorms

SUNTHORN PONGPAO  
APINYA WIPATAYOTIN

His Majesty the King has told his royal rain-making units to break up the large mass of clouds over the North and Northeast to prevent them from creating hailstorms that are harmful to villagers.

A plane named "King Air" took off from a rain-making airbase in Nakhon Sawan on a mission to destroy the clouds with silver iodide yesterday and make them drop rain instead of hailstones, said Prinya Sutikoset, head of the royal rain-making operations in the Central Plain.

Silver iodide is used to increase precipitation in the air, which then induces rainfall.

The Meteorological Department has warned people in the North and Northeast

to brace for more hailstorms this week, after storms wreaked havoc in Chiang Rai and Nan over the weekend.

Hundreds of houses were damaged in the freak storms. Longan and lychee plantations suffered massive damage and at least 100 chickens died after being struck by hailstones.

Rain-making officials are also committed to making artificial rain to ease drought in parts of the Central Plain and the West.

Farmers in many areas have begun to complain of lack of water to irrigate their farmlands. Some reservoirs in Suphan Buri and Uthai Thani provinces hold insufficient levels of water for use in the dry season, officials said.

The Mineral Resources Department has kicked off a landslide disaster prevention and preparedness campaign in Patong,

in Phuket, after a study has found that the beach was vulnerable to natural disasters.

Landslide impact mitigation was needed in the area as it was situated near a hill-slope and was always crowded with tourists, said Apichai Chavajarempun, the department chief.

The department's study concluded that 51 provinces should be listed as landslide-prone areas.

Most of them are northern provinces. Many highland communities in Nan province have already been moved to safer ground, said Mr Apichai.

Jointly operated by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre, the five-year project aims to raise public awareness on the dangers landslides pose and how to protect themselves and their communities.