

Group gears up protests against Thai PM

by UPI

BANGKOK -- Demonstrators brought traffic to a halt in a Bangkok business district Thursday after Thailand's prime minister ignored calls for his resignation.

Taxi drivers parked vehicles at the intersections of roads leading to the business area and also blocked access to a nearby hospital, the Bangkok Post reported.

In a televised interview Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said he wouldn't step down as the leaders of the United Front for Democracy against Dictatorship, the so-called red shirt anti-government movement, demanded Wednesday.

Sources close to group's leadership told the Post the protesters are considering additional measures to put pressure on the government, including an attempt to disrupt the Asean 3 summit Saturday in Pattaya. Another possibility was for the protesters to regroup at several locations with the goal of jamming traffic.

The demonstrators are supporters of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who was elected in 2001 and re-elected in 2005 but ousted in a military coup in 2006. Thaksin, a former telecommunications billionaire, fled the country before he was convicted last year on abuse-of-power charges and lives in exile, mainly in Dubai. Thaksin faces other charges in Thailand and the courts have frozen an estimated \$2 billion in family assets.

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