

A Legacy

For All :

A collection of articles

*Compiled by
Department of Information
Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

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FOREWORD

The Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is pleased to present you with this first ever E-book titled, “*A Legacy for All*,” which boasts a unique collection of articles and insights that reflect the wide range of royal initiatives and their legacy on national development. The articles are written by past and present diplomats, as well as practitioners directly involved with the implementation of royal initiatives which have been grouped under six important areas, namely, public health, sustainable development, water management, humanitarianism, foreign relations, and multiculturalism.

Written during December 2020 – June 2022, these articles were inspired by His Majesty the King’s resolve to preserve and build upon the legacy of His Majesty’s Father in creating happiness and enduring good for all citizens. But what started out as a reflection on the legacy of His Majesty’s Father quickly expanded to reflections on the role of other Members of the Royal Family, and His Majesty the King’s own contributions to Thailand’s national development. Finally, this compilation also serves as a testament to the meaningful contributions and hardwork of the multitude of dedicated civil servants, academicians, farmers, community leaders and others who have continued to advance this important legacy to this day, and for our future generations.

The Department of Information is indeed appreciative and grateful for the valuable contributions of all authors of the articles as well as afore-mentioned individuals whose service was cited herein.

Tanee Sangrat
Director-General of the Department of Information and
Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand

A Legacy That Stands by the People

As we approach the end of this very challenging year of COVID-19, Thais around the world are commemorating our National Day on 5th December, which is also the birthday of His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great, Thai Father's Day, and World Soil Day. All these occasions remind us of how our nation has evolved this far and what institutional forces have kept such progress moving.

Old friends of Thailand might be familiar with stories about the monarchy, whose dedication to nation-building and development are intrinsically interwoven into every chapter of our history. The royal family's cherished commitment towards the welfare of her people was particularly recognised after the Second World War when Thailand had to gather all its strength and resources to combat poverty and maintain security. The kingdom was then blessed with the will power to steer itself through those troubles when His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great, whose name coincidentally means "Strength of the Land, Incomparable Power," acceded to the throne in 1946 at the age of eighteen.

As a constitutional monarchy, the sovereign does not wield any power beyond ceremonial duties. But the King and members of the royal family have the liberty to initiate any charitable activities and development projects and complement government efforts.

Throughout the 70-year reign of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great, around 4,877 royal projects in various fields were initiated to reduce development gaps nationwide. While most projects were financially supported by the government, many of them were fully financed by His Majesty's personal funds.

When I started working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the 1970s, these development projects were just being crystallised. I recall how Thai people keenly followed the televised reports of the King's visits upcountry every evening. Thais valued and became familiar with images of the King holding a wrinkled, well-used map in his hands and a camera hanging from his neck, sweat dripping from his brow, interacting attentively with locals to understand their concerns and environment.

Likewise, the monarchy and the people have always had close and intimate contact, enabling both sides to develop a kinship type of relationship, rather than one of an authoritative nature. Hence, designating 5th December as Father's Day actually originated from the genuine sentiment of the people, who cherished their beloved King as a father figure – a pillar of strength one could always rely upon when in need. Indeed, it was during the turbulent Cold War years that His Majesty led his people through some of Thailand's most challenging times.

An important point worth noting is that it has been customary for the monarchy to stand with the people

and to improve their wellbeing. For instance, I remember that it was also in the 1970s that Her Royal Highness Princess Srinagarindra, the grandmother of His Majesty the present King, established two foundations for community development.

The first is the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, initially founded as the Thai Hill Crafts Foundation to create livelihoods and generate income for ethnic minorities in Northern Thailand. The second is the Princess Mother's Medical Volunteer Foundation, established in 1974, the year I joined the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Princess paid frequent trips to remote villages, taking with her a medical team to treat any sick or injured persons during her visit. This is important because in certain remote areas of the country, access to public health services was quite limited. Stateless people living along the border areas were given treatment just the same. The Foundation is a living testament to her community spirit and non-discriminatory community service in public health which has carried on until today.

Not long after in 1976, Her Majesty Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother set up the SUPPORT Foundation to preserve traditional handicraft techniques and promote them as supplementary sources of income for farmers who have spare time after harvest.

Fast forward to my ambassadorial postings in the 1990s through to the 2000s and beyond, I had many opportunities to celebrate royal contributions to national development. One of the most memorable

occasions was the UNGA's resolution to declare 5th December as World Soil Day, to highlight the importance of healthy soil for sustainable development and commemorate His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great's advocacy in this field. Agriculture was a favourite subject for him since it is so vital for our people's livelihood.

Thailand nowadays has changed immensely from the time when I was a junior diplomat. Economic growth in the last three decades has elevated the country to the upper middle income echelon, and has urbanised the lifestyle of most Thais and the way they perceive the world. State mechanisms have matured, becoming more effective in addressing the grievances of the people. Thai people are more self-dependent, better educated, and have access to opportunities for better prospects in life.

In the fast-changing world where human touch seems to be dominated by virtual interactions, many people have forgotten how the monarchy has stood up for Thai people through thick and thin, and now often take the monarchy for granted. Some, including the more confident and expressive younger generations, are not even certain how to relate the institution to their daily lives, as they did not grow up, like my generation, to experience how the monarchy was directly involved in improving the livelihood of Thai people and Thailand's status in the international arena.

Nevertheless, in such times, the monarchy has always remained steadfast in its conviction and has never

stepped back from assisting the people, often quietly, while expecting nothing in return.

Last year the world saw the ceremonial grandeur of the Coronation of King Rama X, or His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua. In his Oath of Accession, he pledged “to treasure, preserve and build on our heritage.....for the great enduring good of the people.” His Majesty has never forgotten the solemn commitment of continuing the royal practice to help and empower the Thai people to be self-reliant.

His Majesty has supported the royal initiatives of his royal parents and other members of the royal family in numerous endeavours. Many are focused on promoting sustainable development, therefore contributing to Thailand’s achievements in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). For example, since 1978, His Majesty has strategically inaugurated 21 Somdej Phrayuparaj Hospitals in the most remote areas of the country, where they were most needed. More currently, His Majesty made significant donations of medical equipment during COVID-19, supporting SDG 3 on good health and well-being. On education, His Majesty set up the Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn Scholarship Foundation, which has provided scholarships for 1,764 students to receive proper education from high school to bachelor’s degree. This corresponds to SDG 4 on quality education.

His Majesty’s projects are a reflection that sustainable development can only be attained through a community-wide team spirit and concerted efforts to

improve society. To transform this vision into action, he launched the Royal Initiative Volunteer Project to engage the people in public service activities. Such activities strengthen the bond within communities and remind us of how Thai communities throughout history and around the world have always come together to overcome hardships.

The monarchy has been a guiding beacon and stabilising force in Thailand for eight centuries. As some critics have stated, monarchies hold institutional memories of tradition and continuity in ever changing times. They undeniably remind a country of its unique traits and identity, facts that can often be forgotten in the swiftly changing currents of politics. In a volatile and complex world, we are in constant need of inspirational strength of stability to keep our feet on the ground, so that we will not be too easily blown away by the winds of uncertainty. The monarchy is, of course, one of these invaluable institutions that has stood the test of time and serves as an enduring link between our inspirational past, our dynamic present, and our promising future.

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Don Pramudwinai
Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

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01 PUBLIC HEALTH

The Princess of Humanity

Vijavat Isarabhakdi

When a young lady named Sangwan Talapat arrived in the United States of America in the summer of 1917, she would not have imagined that her life would change forever, and that she was about to embark upon a journey of a life time. Born a commoner, she eventually married a prince and became the mother of two kings and a princess. She would touch the lives of countless people, and become an inspiration to them all.

Officially, she is Her Royal Highness Princess Srinagarindra, the Princess Mother of King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great. The title was bestowed in 1970 but most Thais still prefer to call her Somdet Ya or “Princess Grandma,” an address that rightfully reflects the deep affection and respect she has earned from the Thai people.

The Princess was an exemplary model of a dutiful mother, a lifelong learner and a dedicated working woman who never once let time pass idly by. She was a shining case in point of a woman empowered by education, which was a rare case in the first decades of the 20th century when only a few Siamese girls attended school. Yet, despite her status of a princess, she led a simple, humble and down-to-earth life until her very last day. That is why the people’s sentiment

towards her is a warm and caring bond, as if she were their own beloved grandmother.

A competent single mother

Due to the untimely death of her husband, Prince Mahidol of Songkla, in 1929, she abruptly became a single mother of three at the tender age of 29. The Princess moved to Lausanne, Switzerland to raise her three young children. During her stay there, she lived in an unassuming apartment, did the grocery shopping herself and was known by her neighbours as Madame Mahidol rather than as a princess.

A Thai proverb that underlines the influence of mothers on their children states that ‘a good elephant is detectable from its tail and a good lady is identifiable from her mother.’ In the case of the Princess, her thoughtful ways of raising her daughter and two sons have shaped all of them into capable, responsible and caring adults who have followed in the footsteps of their parents, finding immense joy in helping people in need. Her daughter, the late Princess Galyani Vadhana, recalled that the Princess Mother always taught and retained her children to be punctual, frugal and polite. This had not changed even after her eldest son became King Ananda Mahidol at the age of nine in 1935.

An avid student and an active initiator for change

The Princess was an enthusiastic lifelong learner and a working woman in every sense of the word. She received a scholarship to study nursing in the United States of America where she met her future husband. She took courses at Simmons College in Boston while Prince Mahidol of Songkla attended public health courses at Harvard University. The interest of the Mahidol couple in these fields would later prove that it was a boon for the development of modern medicine and public health in Thailand.

In 1974, the Princess established the Princess Mother's Medical Volunteer Foundation (PMMVF) to dispatch volunteer medical teams to offer treatment to people in remote areas. Thailand back then was a second-tier developing country faced with security challenges in various forms, such as internal unrest, poverty and public health. Therefore, the efforts of the Princess not only elevated community spirit but also complemented the government's work in uplifting public welfare.

The Princess would frequently travel with the medical team to every remote corner of the country, often accompanied by her daughter. Hill tribe people were familiar with the sound of her helicopter and referred to her as Mae Fah Luang or Princess from the Sky. The PMMVF has matured over the years with

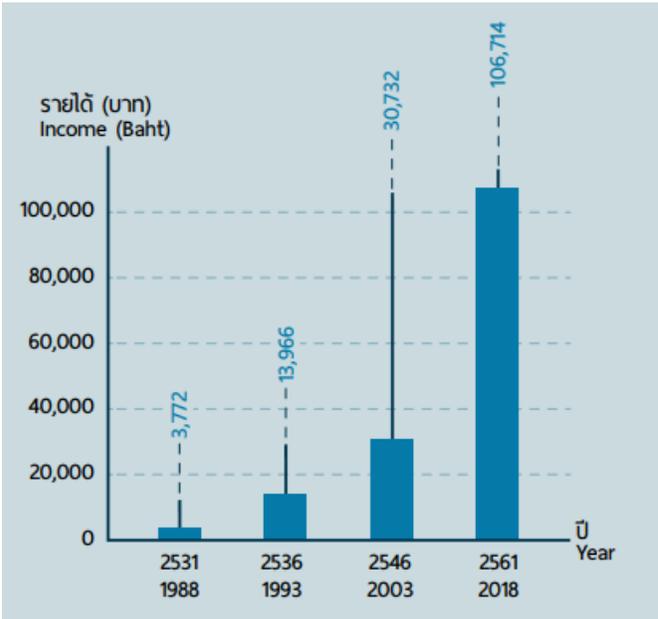
a wide range of projects, including mobile dentistry, eye surgery, and assistance to disabled persons.



*Mobile medical team from PMMVF, 18-24 February 2018, in remote hill of Mae Sariang District, Mae Hong Son Province, where volunteers hiked on foot to reach the villagers.
Source: Ubon Ratchathani University website*

Lausanne had been the Princess's second home for over 50 years. She decided to reside in Thailand permanently when she was almost 90 years old. Doi Tung in northern Chiang Rai was chosen as the location for her 'first home' in her motherland not because of its breathtaking scenery but for the crisis it was suffering. The Princess had visited Doi Tung before and experienced first-hand that the mountains were severely deforested. She vowed to turn this place into lush greenery once again. ***"I will reforest Doi Tung,"*** so she said.

That was how the Mae Fah Luang Foundation, which started in 1972 as the Thai Hill Crafts Foundation, became involved in the development of Doi Tung. It was well known internationally for its mission to elevate the quality of life for locals and to help them achieve sustainable livelihoods. The Foundation is recognised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) for its successful and unique modalities that have helped rural communities eradicate poppy cultivation, empowering them with a community-centred participatory approach. The Foundation has since shared its experiences with other countries and expanded its development collaboration projects with Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Indonesia.



The graph shows an improvement in the average household income over the years.

Source: Mae Fah Luang Foundation website

Three decades after, Doi Tung has been restored to its pristine natural condition with villagers enjoying a sustainable income from alternative crops supported by the Foundation, such as coffee and macadamia nuts. The Foundation also helps villagers to market their handicraft products by supplying them to international brands such as Ikea.

The legacy continues

The Princess passed away in 1995 just three months before she would turn 95. The Princess from the Sky has returned to where she belongs. But her commitment to community service still lives on in the spirit of every medical volunteer of the Princess Mother's Medical Volunteer Foundation. Her love for nature and compassion for the marginalised also remain a magical source of inspiration in Doi Tung and beyond.

In 2000, on the centenary of her birth year, UNESCO honoured the Princess as a “great personality in public service in the fields of education, applied science, and human, social, and environmental development.” On the same occasion, the Princess Srinagarindra Award was established and conferred on persons with outstanding achievements in nursing and social services.

The Princess led a simple life but achieved great accomplishments that captured the hearts of

millions. She found true happiness from her selfless deeds for humanity and the less advantaged as reflected in one of her remarks with the Border Patrol Police. ***“I always realise your difficulties in undertaking your duties and I am pleased to provide assistance to all of you for the benefits of the nation.”***

* * * * *

A Modern Monarch in Action: Mobilising Relief in a Pandemic

Tana Weskosith

Friends of Thailand might be familiar with anecdotes about the Thai monarchy that has stood fast alongside the Thai people through thick and thin—from combatting poverty throughout the ages to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic since last year. Their Majesties the King and Queen, like their forefathers, have continued to take this mission on board in all types of situations, whether they be during a crisis or in times of peace. Their mission to alleviate any sort of suffering that may befall the people, and to improve the people’s quality of life, education and health, is a serious one—one that has been upheld as a solemn oath to the people, a life-long legacy that was passed down from erstwhile generations of kings.

The Royal Family works in the mindfulness of a simple but practical rationale, that all Thai people should have access to basic public services even in the most remote areas of the country, so that they are able to earn a decent livelihood in good health and

happiness. That is what the monarchy believes it owes to its people. Since Thailand is not a rich country, there is a need for all stakeholders to pool resources in order to yield meaningful social impact and change. That is why the Royal Family has been continuously devoting their energy and personal funds behind the scenes, building upon and mobilising collective social efforts even before the term ‘PPP’ or public, private partnership was coined, to complement government mechanisms and draw participation of civil society, private sector and individual philanthropists. Combined with the ownership of local communities and volunteerism, such efforts would strengthen their actions towards this goal. With or without the opportunity to publicise themselves, the Royal Family have continued their generations—and centuries—long commitment with steadfast determination.

His Majesty the King’s Grandfather, Prince Mahidol, was aware that a strong public health system was crucial to national development and chose to study medicine at Harvard University, determined to lay a solid foundation for teaching medical sciences in Thailand. He offered a considerable sum of his own money as scholarships for talented students to study medical sciences, nursing and medical research in the United Kingdom. These seeds planted in the past have nurtured a legacy on the development of modern medicine and public health services in Thailand to this very day.

The King's Grandmother, Princess Srinagarindra, supported her husband's endeavour by establishing the Medical Volunteer Foundation in 1974 to ensure that the population in remote areas have access to medical care. The Foundation sends volunteers to treat patients in the most remote areas of the country, which have limited access to public healthcare facilities and empowers community service in public health, another powerful tool in Thailand's public health system.

The King's Father, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great, through the Crown Property Bureau, funded the establishment of Siam Bioscience Co. Ltd. in 2009, to specialise in manufacturing biopharmaceuticals. The company's excellence has since been internationally recognized, as it became the only manufacturing plant in Thailand to be certified with the international manufacturing standards of PIC/s GMP, ISO9001:2015, and ISO17025:2016. Subsequently, in 2020, the British-Swedish pharmaceutical and biopharmaceutical company, AstraZeneca, in its fast quest to set up a manufacturing base for its COVID-19 vaccines in Southeast Asia, found that Siam Bioscience was the only qualified choice as its local partner to produce AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines for Thailand and Southeast Asia.



Siam Bioscience Co., Ltd., the first and only biopharmaceuticals manufacturer in Thailand, was founded in 2009 to preserve and continue what His Majesty the Late King Rama IX initiated to promote public health and enable access to high quality but affordable pharmaceutical products to the public.
Source: Siam Bioscience website

According to James Teague, Country President of AstraZeneca (Thailand) Ltd.:

“The Thailand vaccine production facility, critical to not only the Thailand Government’s fight against the pandemic but also to the other eight Southeast Asian countries the plant will export to, has passed the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), a system ensuring that products are consistently produced and controlled according to quality standards. The company’s plants also achieved multiple

international standards such as ISO9001, ISO17025, and ISO13485. Each batch of the vaccine undergoes more than 60 different quality control tests during its journey from manufacture to vaccination. The process takes time, and it is designed to assure every person who is given the vaccine that it is of the same high quality that can be expected from any AstraZeneca product.”

Moreover, AstraZeneca vaccines produced by Siam Bioscience have also passed the quality testing at AstraZeneca’s designated laboratories in Europe and the US.

Building on this royal legacy to observe and support the needs of society, Their Majesties the King and the Queen have continuously monitored the COVID-19 situation with concern since the very beginning of the outbreak in Thailand last year, knowing that the impact upon the population was complex and would last for years to come.



*Thai health officials and biosafety mobile units to support active case finding in high-risk communities.
Source: Chulabhorn Royal Academy Facebook page*

To assist the government in tackling the crisis, Their Majesties' contributions were multifaceted and well-thought out, bringing meaningful impact across high-risk communities nation-wide. These include donations of essential life-saving medical equipment and supplies to prevent, test and treat patients, as well as relief to alleviate economic and social adversities, and even support for children-turned-orphans whose parents succumbed to the disease. Most recently, donations have also been extended to finance the setting up of field hospitals, community isolation centres, and quarantine sites all over the country to help reduce the burden of hospitals in treating COVID-19 patients.



Digital portable x-ray devices, with artificial intelligence systems, have been delivered to 19 field hospitals to provide treatment for COVID-19 infected patients.

Source: Royal Office website

The value of contributions which came from Their Majesties' personal funds are estimated at 1.3 billion baht. These include, inter alia, 488 ventilators, 740,000 sets of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for frontline workers and health care professionals, 624 power air-purifying respirators (PAPR) for use in operation rooms and ICUs; eight ambulances for transporting patients in remote areas, equipped with 4G communications technology; modular swab units equipped with pressure-controlled ventilation, decreasing the risk of infections for medical personnel to 20 hospitals nationwide; 36 Biosafety Mobile Units for active case finding missions, particularly in high-risk areas; funding of 243.8 million baht to the Department of

Corrections to procure medical equipment to care for inmates in penitentiaries who had contracted the virus; and 227.4 million baht worth of care packages to 659 communities in Bangkok and other provinces as well as freshly cooked meals for medical personnel and communities in high-risk areas of infections in Bangkok.

Her Royal Highness Princess Chulabhorn, as President of the Royal Chulabhorn Academy, has also played an active role in advancing medical science and care in Thailand. The Royal Chulabhorn Academy, as an advanced public health and medical research institute under state supervision, has stepped up efforts to help the country secure more vaccines against COVID-19, sharing the responsibility to help save lives in a crisis situation. Through an established procedure under the law, the Academy has thus far procured two million doses of Sinopharm: one million doses arrived in Thailand on 20 June 2021, and another one million doses arrived on 4 July.



*Chulabhorn Royal Academy helps to administer Sinopharm to save lives during the public health crisis.
Source: Royal Office website*

Despite these efforts, Thailand, as with many other countries, is temporarily facing a shortage of vaccines. This can be attributed to inequitable distribution of vaccines around the world, as well as an overall shortage of vaccine supplies, caused by circumstances in the global vaccine industry and supply chains as acknowledged by the World Health Organisation. On its part, the Thai Government is also doing all it can, leaving no stones unturned and working closely with both the public and private sectors of other countries to procure more vaccines.

Tackling the COVID-19 pandemic certainly requires an all-of-society approach if we are to successfully save lives and bring back normalcy. The Thai monarchy certainly has been doing its part. For generations, the Royal Family has consistently supported the development of the country's public health system. It has contributed towards both the hard infrastructure, in terms of hospitals and medical supplies, as well as the soft infrastructure, through capacity building of medical personnel and strengthening local communities: all with the ultimate goal of building a healthy and resilient society for sustainable development, and preparedness against any public health crisis.

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02 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

A Philosophy that Empowers from Within

Dusit Manapan

Thailand is a dedicated advocate for global sustainable development. The Kingdom has been promoting its homegrown Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) as an alternative approach to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). First introduced by King Bhumibol Adulyadej after the Asian financial crisis in 1997, SEP has become Thailand's development concept that is universally applicable.

The philosophy is a culmination of His Majesty's reflections from decades of extensive tours and conversations with villagers around the country. Even the grounds of Chitralada Villa, his royal palace, were used for experimenting agricultural projects that could be extended to other areas. This royal legacy remains the core of Thailand's national development efforts to this day.

SEP provides us with a foundation, and acts as a compass towards sustainability, based on three interrelated principles and two pillars. The first principle is moderation, which means producing and consuming within one's capacity, and avoiding overindulgence. The second one is reasonableness, or the use of our mental faculties to assess the causes

and consequences of actions on our well-being, our household and our community. Prudence is the third principle, which refers to risk management so as to be prepared for impacts from any disruptions. Additionally, the two critical pillars needed to implement SEP principles successfully are knowledge, and ethics and virtues. The former enables us to effectively plan and execute developmental activities. The latter fosters human development by emphasising honesty, altruism, and perseverance, with the ultimate goal to create active, engaged citizens, and to promote good governance.

SEP is obviously not a how-to handbook for development. Rather, it is a philosophy that guides our inner thinking to immunize ourselves from external shocks. Likewise, there is flexibility for the concept to be applied in any environment and level. However, sufficiency economy does not mean we have to be complacent in life. We can consider going beyond our basic needs as long as it does not exceed our existing means and capacity. The essence of SEP is clear that it encourages us to be sensible and realistic.

SEP has inspired numerous projects both in Thailand and elsewhere. The Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA) is Thailand's coordinator in forging development cooperation with international partners worldwide. SEP-based development models implemented by TICA are specifically designed to assist developing countries escape the cycle of excessive dependence on foreign

aid. The objective is to create resilient communities starting from the individual level by enhancing productivity within the limitations of existing income and resources.

Since 2003, TICA has carried out 36 SEP projects in 21 countries across Asia Pacific and Africa, from the Kyrgyz Republic to Timor-Leste and from Mozambique to Solomon Islands. At present, there are 29 projects in 19 countries, which testify that SEP can be translated into action anywhere.

There are two main types of overseas SEP projects to institutionalise the self-development process and to conserve local knowledge and wisdom: 1) the establishment of SEP Learning Centres, to serve as a comprehensive database, and community learning centre with a designated expert to provide guidance; and 2) the development of SEP Sustainable Communities to serve as role models on development.

SEP Learning Centre projects are being implemented in Lao PDR, Myanmar, Timor-Leste, Brunei Darussalam, Tonga, Fiji, and Lesotho. At the same time, SEP Sustainable Community projects are in progress in Cambodia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Benin, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, the Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal, and Senegal. Thai experts and TICA's Friends of Thailand Volunteers have been dispatched to work with local stakeholders in several of these countries.

For instance, in Lao PDR, Thai and Lao officials have established Learning Centres for Sustainable Development in Agriculture at Dong Kham Chang Agricultural Technical College, Vientiane, Agricultural Technical College, Khammouan and Agricultural Technical College, Sekong. These centres maximise the potential of human resources by providing capacity building courses that covers the whole supply chain, such as farm management, productivity management, and market analysis. As agriculture is a vital sector in landlocked Lao PDR, strengthening its agricultural capacity will safeguard domestic food security and enable farmers to sustain their livelihood.



Learning to make wood vinegar, to use as pesticide and fertiliser, at the Learning Centres for Sustainable Development in Agriculture at Agricultural Technical College, Sekong, Lao PDR.

Source: Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)

In Bhutan, SEP practitioners assisted in developing community products by localising Thailand's One Tambon (Sub-district) One Product (OTOP) scheme as One Gewog One Product (OGOP) in Haa and Tsirang Districts. OGOP Model includes the establishment of a Community Learning Centre on community-based tourism in Haa District, and one on sustainable community development in Tsirang District, with a view to empowering local authorities and communities.



*Products of One Gewog One Product (OGOP) in Haa and Tsirang Districts, Bhutan
Source: Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)*

In Tonga, the Chai Pattana Foundation under royal patronage and the Tonga Royal Palace have jointly overseen an agricultural model project, which applies “New Theory Agriculture.” The idea is to divide the land for multiple purposes such as for crop cultivation, livestock farming, fisheries, and water resources. This approach has helped to ensure sufficient resources for household consumption, and to reduce the reliance on food imports. It has increased agricultural productivity, generated income, and elevated living standards. The success of this demonstration model has since been replicated around the kingdom island.

Development is achievable through various paths. In many cases such as in Lao PDR, Bhutan and Tonga, the simple yet practical approach of SEP has been as beneficial as any other alternatives while being even more relatable to the respective local conditions.

The concept is, of course, not free from skepticism. But Thailand has tried and tested the applicability of SEP well enough before sharing it abroad. Based on its policy of prosper thy neighbour, SEP is one of Thailand’s tools in helping neighbouring countries to attain economic security, food security, and self-sufficiency. The success of SEP projects in neighbouring countries would not only benefit the local communities there, but also contribute towards peace, prosperity, and closer people-to-people ties along the border areas with Thailand. The same principle applies to cooperation with countries beyond the region, which is to assist them to

transition from being recipient countries towards becoming Thailand's partner in a wider array of dimensions.

Sustainable development is a global agenda that requires collective action, and SEP is Thailand's contribution to such end. Through decades of accumulated experience, Thailand has discovered its answer on how to pass on a sustainable world to our younger generations through local empowerment. Thousands of development projects based on SEP in Thailand have already improved the livelihood of communities nationwide. As such, SEP could perhaps be another practical and worthy development track that other countries can adapt to their specific contexts.

* * * * *

From Poppy to Coffee: How Thailand Became a Model for Alternative Development

Chutintorn Gongsakdi

When their bright red petals fall away, farmers would slit open the egg-shaped seed pods of *Papaver somniferum* or opium poppy. Milky ‘poppy tear’ would then ooze out from these open wounds, starting the extraction of the crudest form of opium. This method of poppy cultivation can be traced back to at least five millennia ago in the texts of the Sumerians, who called the plant *Hul Gil*, or the ‘plant of joy’.



*Field of poppies blowing in the wind
Source: FabioFilzi, iStockphoto.com*



Poppy heads with seeds
Source: tiborgartner, iStockphoto.com



Close up on Papaver somniferum, the opium poppy cultivation
Source: Lex20, iStockphoto.com

Joy is exactly the reason why this plant spread all over the world so quickly. Originally used for pain relief, opium was later introduced as a recreational drug in Europe and Asia. Highly addictive, it dominated international trade and politics in the 19th century. It was only after World War II that its harmful effects were widely acknowledged and opium suppression became a global agenda.

In Southeast Asia, opium poppies have been cultivated for centuries. Possibly brought in from southern China, the use of opium was integrated into the culture of indigenous communities such as the Hmong and Karen. Their usage of poppy seeds was in moderation and in their traditional medicine and religious ceremonies, and even had been used as a currency.

The arrival of migrants and ethnic groups during the Chinese Civil War in the 1940s led to an exponential increase of opium production in the mountains of Thailand, Myanmar and Lao PDR. As the only available cash crop, the new highlanders had little choice but to cultivate poppy to escape poverty, but even so, did not receive high returns. The network of illegal trade in the Golden Triangle, an area where the borders of the three countries meet, peaked during the 1960s with an estimated 145 tons of opium produced in Thailand annually.

The Thai government banned opium in 1958. However, insufficient resources and the lack of understanding among the highland peoples resulted in an unsuccessful campaign to restrict poppy cultivation. As the locals resented the government's efforts to resettle them in the lowlands, Thai officials started to look for an alternative method to reduce opium production.

In 1969, while visiting Chiang Mai province, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great learned that some poppy growers could earn a comparable

amount of money from selling local peaches. That was when he developed the idea that growing an improved peach variety could possibly generate more income than opium poppy, minus the risk of being involved in criminal activities, and therefore, opium cultivation could organically wither away from existence.

This concept of crop substitution and genetic improvement was swiftly translated into actions that has created an environment of human security and a sustainable livelihood for villagers - a holistic approach to security. The concept would eventually be called alternative development model, whereby the people are empowered to pursue the development path of their choice rather than being forced to surrender to prevailing conditions. The King deployed his knowledge on geography and botany to sponsor the research on alternative crops. He instituted the 'Royal Project,' a private charitable organisation to support alternative development in Northern Thailand. The Royal Project ran its first training programme with the highlanders in 1970, while the King set up development stations in the area.

In tandem with the Royal Project, members of the Royal Family supported several other initiatives to address illiteracy, poverty and public health in the remote mountains. Many of them were frequent visitors to the villages to organise medical check-ups through the Princess Mother's Medical Volunteer

Foundation, and to provide assistance to schools in need. All these concerted efforts took decades of perseverance to bear fruit. But the yield, as proven today, is worth the wait.

Since the beginning, the Royal Project worked with the Thai government and international organisations to conduct research and development, and to provide seeds, fertiliser, training, and supporting infrastructure. In 1971, the Royal Project and the Thai Narcotics Control Board partnered with the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) to establish the Crop Replacement and Community Development Project. Since then, the Royal Project and relevant agencies have introduced more than 150 new crops to poppy growers, including arabica coffee, tea, cabbage, apple, and decorative flowers.

Nevertheless, poppy eradication did not begin until 1985. The officials recognised that radical measures could lead to counterproductive results. They waited until the projects could generate sufficient income for poppy farmers, and eradication was mostly negotiated to ensure a sustainable outcome. As a result, poppy cultivation in Thailand fell by 97 percent from 1985 to 2015 and has never relapsed.

Today, the Royal Project is a public foundation with 39 development centres and research stations. Under the patronage of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn, the foundation continues to expand its work with the opening of Ler Tor Development Centre in Tak province in 2016, which is assisting

more than 300 Karen farmers. The Royal Project products are currently processed and distributed in supermarkets under the brand *Doi Kham*. Some products, such as dried fruit and juice, are available in Japan, China and Russia.

Coffee beans of *Doi Tung*, another brand of alternative development products from Mae Fah Luang Foundation, created by Princess Srinagarindra, the Princess Mother in Chiang Rai province, has been selected by Japan Airlines and Japanese retailer Muji for their catering service.

The works of the Royal Project were realised through synchronised efforts of all key players. For instance, the Thai government provided human capital development by extending healthcare services and developing schools in former opium-producing villages, as well as the provision of Thai citizenship. The highland communities now have access to rights as a Thai citizen, such as the right to own land, non-farming work and qualifications to apply for bank loans. This would not have been possible had it not been for the monarchy's subtle but effective support to steer collaboration that has bound all stakeholders together, from policy makers to villagers, towards the same direction. Considering the local villagers' skepticism of government officials at the time, the face of the institution was the only one that was received with genuine respect and trust by all parties.



*Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station in Chiangmai Province
Source: Office of the Royal Development Projects Board
website*



*Angkhang Royal Agricultural Station in Chiangmai Province
Source: Public Relations Department Facebook page*

The Alternative Development model or AD initiated by the Royal Project Foundation has been recognised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime as a uniquely successful undertaking in sustainably replacing narcotic crops with alternative means to generate income. Not only did the Royal Project contribute to the security-building process by reducing illicit crop and crimes, it also succeeded in bolstering economic, food, and environmental security for the ethnic communities who were living on the edge of poverty. It has since gone the extra mile

to collaborate with UN agencies by introducing similar programmes in countries such as Lao PDR, Myanmar, Colombia, Peru and even Afghanistan, to name a few. Aiming to be the learning institute for sustainable development, the Royal Project Foundation continues to empower and dignify the livelihoods of local communities in Thailand and beyond.



Photo by Mae Fah Luang Foundation

This project in Northern Thailand has generated important experiences especially on environmental protection, reforestation and non-agricultural income generating activities. Though operating only in Thailand, the experiences and knowledge generated, especially regarding income generating activities, could, if shared through training or other forms of cooperation with other agencies, projects and countries, be of great benefit to regional alternative development efforts. The project is under the supervision of M.R. Disnadda Diskul, Secretary General, Mae Fah Luang Foundation.

UNODC Eastern Horizons, Summer/ Autumn 2005 edition, page 8

Source: UNODC website

* * * * *

The gift that keeps on giving: Thailand's scaly quest for food security and sustainable livelihood

Singtong Lapisatepun

“There is rice in the fields and fish in the water,” is an old saying that speaks to the natural abundance of Thailand as the land of milk and honey with fresh, affordable food aplenty. Most Thais are experts when it comes to naming freshwater fish, which is an easily accessible source of quality protein. There is, however, one particular fish that has become a common household name but its exact origin is unknown to the younger Thais.



Photo courtesy of the Department of Fisheries, Thailand

The mouthbrooder—a name it received from cradling its hatchlings in its mouth until the younglings come of age—is also known to scientists as *Oreochromis niloticus* or *Tilapia nilotica*, a cichlid fish native to the northern half of Africa and some parts of the Middle East. Colloquially named Nile tilapia in English from its natural habitat and *pla nil* in Thai from an abbreviation of its scientific name, this hardy fish whose versatility as an herbivore with omnivorous tendencies and trimester hatching cycles is ideally suited for any freshwater source. The story of this fish began in earnest with a school of 50 mouthbrooders raised in a palace pond whose offspring would one day go on to feed millions of people.

The origin of the fish's local popularity could be traced back to the visit to Thailand in 1964 of Emperor Emeritus Akihito, then the Crown Prince of Japan. While visiting the Museum of Fisheries at Kasetsart University, the royal guest who is an avid ichthyologist, was particularly pleased with the variety of fish specimens at the museum. Then a specimen of goby fish first discovered in Thailand caught his attention.



Pla Nil or the Nile Tilapia.

Photo courtesy of the Department of Fisheries, Thailand

With his encyclopaedic knowledge of fish, he enquired: ***“Is this the fish that Dr. Smith found?”*** This very utterance carries a special meaning for two reasons: firstly, the fish was named “Mahidol Goby Fish” in honour of Prince Mahidol Adulyadej, the Father of King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great; and, secondly, the species was first discovered and named in 1953 by Dr. Hugh McCormick Smith, a leading ichthyologist, who was engaged by King Vajiravudh, the uncle of King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great, to set up the country’s Department of the Protection of Aquatic Animals. Dr. Smith, later on, became the first Director-General of this very department.

That historical visit created a long-lasting bond between the current Emperor Emeritus of Japan and the previous monarch of Thailand, united through their interests in the study of fish. The serendipitous event set in motion a series of events that introduced “pla nil” as the common Thai household’s go-to source of affordable protein, popularised by its tasty and tender flesh usually fried, grilled or cooked with other ingredients that create the Thai style umaminess.

In 1965, King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great would write to request tilapias from Crown Prince Akihito who responded by gifting him with 50 *Tilapia nilotica*. The first batch of *pla nil* was kept in a pond at Chitralada Palace, the King’s royal residence. The fish made the palace its home, and quickly multiplied. Up to 10,000 fingerlings were later donated to the Department of Fisheries. Since then, the fish can be found in rice paddies, ponds and other water sources in all corners of Thailand.

This means that those in need of a hearty meal rich in protein could simply take their pick from backyard ponds, flooded rice paddy fields and communal water sources. In fact, it was the late King’s ingenious idea to introduce the fish to rice farmers so it could be reared in flooded rice fields during plantation season. Rice farmers could receive the full nutrients they need with carbohydrates from rice and protein from fish. The farmers could also generate extra income from farming fish while awaiting rice harvests.

Access to such quality protein enables most Thais to develop a level of resiliency against external volatilities, or a certain “self-immunity.” This is in line with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP) that seeks to ensure a level of protection against unforeseen shocks and externalities while fostering sustainable food security according to SDGs Goal 2 of ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture.

With royal support and guidance, the Department of Fisheries was able to innovate aquaculture technologies that would facilitate mass production of Nile tilapia for large-scale, commercial farming. The latest innovation entails the cradling of the fish eggs inside artificial trays that mimic the conditions of the parent fish’s mouth, thereby reducing the rate of mutation and premature loss of life naturally associated with natural mouthbrooding process. Thanks to this technique, Nile tilapia can nowadays be mass produced at a capacity of 220,000 tonnes per annum with over 300,000 fish farmers countrywide adopting the latest technology.



Pla Nil chips, a processed product developed by the fish farmers

Fish farmers are also getting more innovative with processing their products. Instead of relying solely on selling white meat to markets, progress is underway to diversify products to tasty snacks such as fish chips or baked fish with herbs as ready-made meals for modern consumers. In so doing, the fishermen are also aiming to cut the vicious cycle of middle men.

Since the first school of Nile tilapia arrived in Thailand, the Department of Fisheries has been successful in developing new strains of fish that are easier to raise and more resistant to diseases. One of them, Chitralada 3, was brought to Mozambique as part of the project to train locals on how to raise the fish as an additional source of food in their locality. *Pla nil* was brought back to its home continent and

the hatchery in Mozambique can now breed new fingerlings of Chitralada strain tilapia themselves.



Pla nil farming pond being prepared by local farmers in Mozambique.

Photo courtesy of the Royal Thai Embassy in Maputo

From its humble beginnings as gifts to a friend formed out of the love for science and zoology, the *Tilapia nilotica* is a gift that keeps on giving beyond borders. Tens of thousands tonnes of *pla nil* are produced annually, providing stable livelihoods to countless families in Thailand and abroad. It also supports food security, economic prosperity and provides a steady source of income in line with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy.

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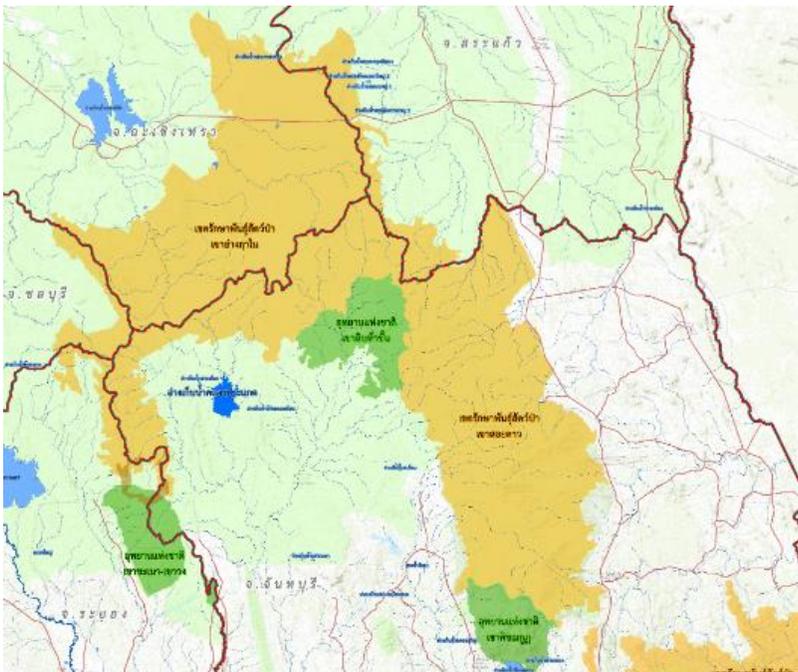
Bajrasudha Gajanurak: A Royal Elixir to Strengthen Wild Elephants

General Chalermchai Sitthisad (Ret.)

The Bajrasudha Gajanurak Project originated from a concern shared by His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Her Majesty Queen Suthida, having learned of the conflict between local communities and wild elephants as the animals encroached upon farmland and houses to forage for food which was otherwise inadequate in their natural habitat. Limited food sources have forced wild elephants to such behavioural pattern, posing risks to the lives of the elephants as well as humans, particularly in five eastern provinces of Thailand, namely Chachoengsao, Chon Buri, Rayong, Chanthaburi, and Sa Kaeo. To ensure the successful implementation of this project, Their Majesties appointed Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha as Chair of the Committee on the Bajrasudha Gajanurak Project and accepted the project under Royal Patronage on 2 August 2019.

While the name of the project literally means “an elixir that strengthens elephants to be as strong as diamonds,” the project’s true objective equally focuses on the welfare of both wild elephants and humans alike, and to strike that delicate balance where both species can comfortably exist side by side.

The project also aims to create a natural setting where local folks and the pachyderms can share resources in nearby habitats, through safe, lasting and practical solutions that can be maintained by the communities themselves. It seeks to build on the lifelong work of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother, on the conservation of natural resources and improvement of living standards for communities adjacent to forests in the said five eastern provinces.



Map shows the border areas in five eastern provinces—Chon Buri, Chachoengsao, Rayong, Chanthaburi, and Sa Kaeo—where yellow indicates wildlife sanctuaries, dark green indicates national parks, and light green depicts National Reserved Forests.

Source: Kajanurak website

To achieve this aspiration, the areas bordering forests in the five eastern provinces have been divided into three zones. The zoning approach creates a sustainable solution for co-existence between humans and wildlife, as natural separations enable seamless transitions between the two worlds. Therefore, the risk of possible confrontations between the two species is significantly reduced and become manageable. The zones include a forest conservation area as a natural dwelling for wild elephants, a buffer or in-between zone for both animals and humans, and a community zone. Since the start of the project, careful action plans have been implemented and can be summarised as follows.

1. Forest Conservation Zones for Elephants: designated water sources have been provided for wild elephants within this zone to dissuade them from venturing out of their natural habitat in search for food. The aim is to improve and to build a total of 60 large-scale, medium-scale, and small-scale water sources, with a combined capacity of approximately 1,800,000 cubic metres. Thus far, 23 water sources have already been established.

In addition, the forest reforestation efforts in Khao Ang Rue Nai Wildlife Sanctuary of Chachoengsao Province, Khao Soi Dao Wildlife Sanctuary of Chanthaburi Province, as well as other forest conservation areas have indeed helped replenish natural food sources for wild elephants. Fifteen plots of grassy meadows now grow on a total area of 448 hectares. Other suitable food crops and edible flora

have also been carefully planted for the wild elephants and their wild peers. These include lush bamboo forests, delectable local fruits such as mangoes, bananas, as well as artificial salt licks in the natural corridor connecting Khao Chamao-Khao Wong National Park in Rayong Province, with Khao Ang Rue Nai Wildlife Sanctuary in Chachoengsao Province.



*Grassy meadow in Khao Ang Rue Nai Wildlife Sanctuary, Chachoengsao Province, under the care of the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation
Source: Royal Office*



*Baan Na Yao Reservoir, Sanam Chai Khet District,
Chachoengsao Province, under the care of the
Royal Forest Department
Source: Royal Office*

2. Buffer Zones: natural corridors connecting different ecosystems have been created to serve as temporary dwelling places for wild elephants. These buffer zones dissuade elephants from venturing out to forage in local communities, and from there they would be safely guided back to the forest conservation zones. The buffer zones offer moist, grassy meadows and food sources for wild elephants. Water flow is controlled by check dams constructed to keep the land moist. As a result, the buffer zones have been transformed into rich, nutritious food reserves for not only elephants, but all sorts of wildlife, be they banteng, gaur or Indian bison, and barking deer. Some community forests have even been converted into buffer zones as they host a wide range of biodiversity and crop species, useful for both humans and wildlife. These include

inter alia, dipterocarpus alatus, rattan, and paduak. In addition, medicinal plants such as red galangal, pepper, cardamom, and water tubes, have been included in the buffer zones for household use. Strong scented plants which elephants find repugnant, such as climbing wattle and cassia, are also cleverly added at the boundary of the zones, as a natural perimeter to deter elephants from straying into local communities and damaging homes.



Designated area for planting medicinal herbs at the Bajrasudha Gajanurak Project in Baan Sa Luang, Sa Kaeo Province

Source: Gajanurak Baan Sa Luang Facebook page

Comprehensive elephant surveillance systems equipped with artificial intelligence technology are set up within the buffer zones. These are called Gajanurak Operation Centres and can track and monitor elephant movements via automated

cameras. When the surveillance system detects elephants, an alert signal will be sent via the LINE chat application to local villagers and the volunteer team, tasked with returning the wild elephants to their natural habitat. The first Gajanurak Operation Centre was set up in Khao Chamao National Park, Rayong Province, with personal funds from His Majesty the King. Since then, a similar centre has been established in Khao Ang Rue Nai Wildlife Sanctuary, Chachoengsao Province, to record and collect information from other automated surveillance systems set up in the five eastern provinces, and to create a database for future collaboration among related agencies.

3. Community Zones: the final zonal designation focuses on community development as well as raising awareness and creating understanding among local villagers on the behaviour of wild elephants. This is necessary as it helps encourage participation of local villagers to work with authorities in reducing the risk of confrontation with wild elephants. In addition, community zones support training for volunteers to learn how to properly rehabilitate wild elephants back to their habitat. Eight “Gajanurak Villages” or pilot villages have been set up towards this end, with an additional 43 villages within the network to expand the activities of the pilot villages to an even broader audience. The network currently includes 51 villages, or 17 per cent of the 299 villages affected by foraging wild elephants. Additionally, Their Majesties the King and Queen have made personal contributions to establish

the Gajanurak Fund and to purchase elephant surveillance equipment, alarm systems, radio communications systems and torchlights for volunteers tasked with alerting the villagers of any possible elephant confrontations.

Such community development activities have deepened the understanding amongst the villagers on nature preservation and co-existence with wildlife. The villagers have also been empowered with skillsets to improve their livelihoods as well as management of village funds. In conjunction with strengthening the capacity of local communities, there have also been efforts to restore water sources for villagers in all the five eastern provinces, to store enough water for consumption and agriculture to maintain a sustainable livelihood. Through such efforts, the villagers are united in solidarity, sharing with one another their knowledge on a variety of alternative livelihoods, including moving away from single-cropping to multiple cropping. As a result, the local villagers have established 33 groups or associations to assist one another in earning income from different sources. These include medicinal herbs, basketry, and food processing in the Gajanurak Villages and network villages. Such local congregations serve as models for sustainable adaptation to living with natural surroundings and wildlife. The approach enhances local communities' quality of life while offering them peace of mind and protection from wild animals through the use of alert and surveillance systems.

The implementation of the Bajrasudha Gajanurak Project thus far has made progress in all aspects as it seeks to solve the problems at their root causes in a sustainable manner, as advocated by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great. Key to future success is the commitment from all stakeholders, particularly local ownership. Nevertheless, since the conflict between elephants and local communities has been a longstanding issue, and the wild elephants have grown accustomed to foraging on villagers' farmland, it will naturally take time to change these elephants' behaviour and assist their return to the forest.

Brewing an elixir that works is never easy. Hopefully, the current success of the Bajrasudha Gajanurak Project will inspire many more to quest for their own magic potion that will make a difference.

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Building Resilience through Food Security

Dr. Wiwat Salyakamthorn

“[T]he strengthening of our economic foundation [should begin] by assuring that the majority of our population has enough to live on... Once reasonable progress has been achieved, we should then embark on the next steps...”

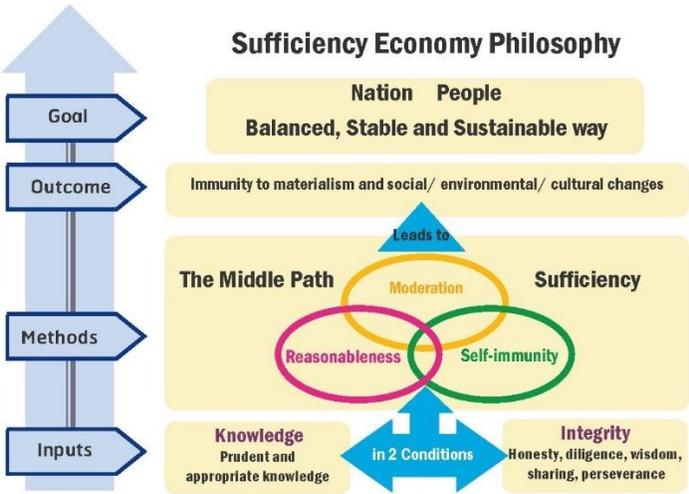
His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great

Thailand is world-renowned for her flavourful culinary delights with dishes like Pad Thai and Tom Yum Kung born out of a unique gastronomic history, maintained by the ingenuity of Thais to evolve their dishes in celebration of their culture. But all of this is only possible because of one simple fact—Thailand enjoys an abundance and diversity of agricultural produce.

From the steep stepped farmlands of the North to the rain-soaked terrain of the South, agricultural best practices well-suited to each of the country’s topographical feature provide a steady stream of fresh produce that has been woven into the rich tapestry of Thai cuisine. What might be a lesser-known fact is that the country owes much of her agricultural success to the lifelong dedication of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great, in fostering resiliency through advancing

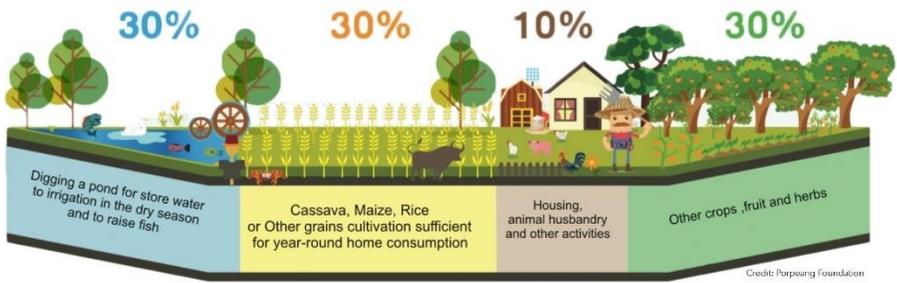
food security for the Thai people. King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua has taken the concept further, by ensuring that Thais nationwide continue to enjoy food security through scalable best practices in agriculture.

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great initiated more than 4,000 development projects for the betterment of the Thai people’s livelihoods, all of which were based firmly in his philosophy of Sufficiency Economy, which advances fundamental principles of Thai culture deeply rooted in Buddhist precepts. The philosophy espouses development in all aspects based on moderation, prudence and self-immunity. It emphasises living within one’s means and with limited resources, thereby decreasing dependence on externalities and susceptibility to market volatility while increasing one’s control over the means of production and output.



Sufficiency Economy Philosophy
Source: Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)

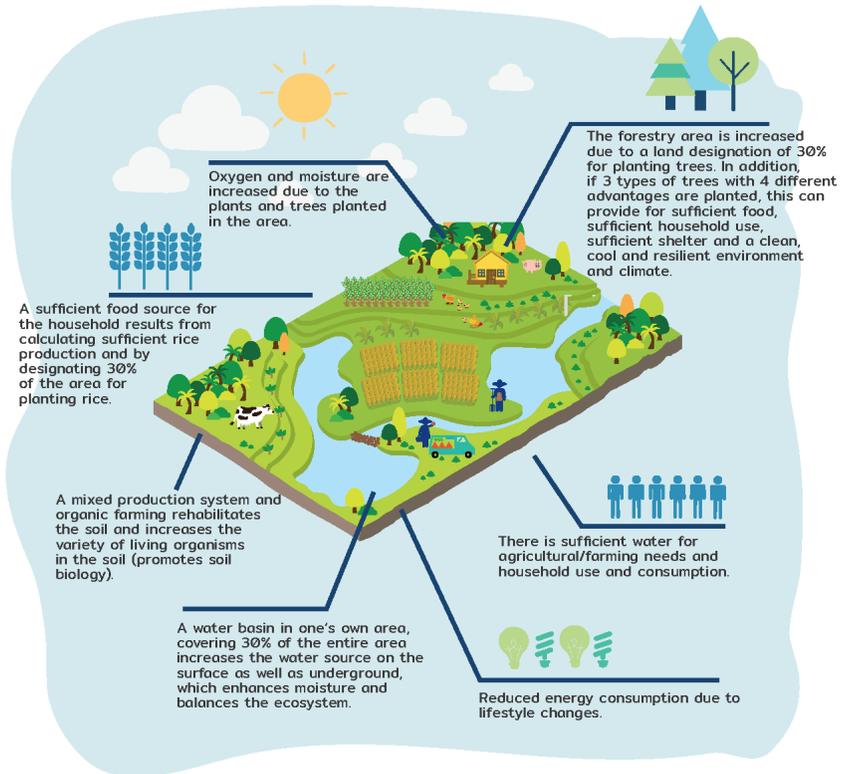
At the time of the Philosophy's conception, Thailand was still an agrarian country but one poised for significant economic development. His Majesty the late King had the foresight and vision that such development could not and should not leave anyone behind. This compassion then engendered the New Theory, under which the essential principles of the philosophy of sufficiency economy are applied to agriculture. Given the historical context, food security at the individual and the household levels would come to underpin more stable economic growth by lessening the risk of external shocks at the grassroots level. By reaching the furthest first, the New Theory is one of the most concrete examples of the application of the philosophy of Sufficiency Economy as it seeks to foster balanced and sustainable living through the management of land and water conservation, especially for those whose livelihoods were particularly susceptible to impacts of economic crises and natural disasters. This, in turn, allows farmers and small-scale land owners to holistically manage their lands while living harmoniously with nature and within society as they can rely on locally sourced produce for sustenance, even in the face of economic hardship.



The first stage of the scheme was a farm on a 15 rai (about 6 acres). Divide into 4 parts

The New Theory Agriculture

Source: Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)



The New Theory Farming Practice

Source: Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA)

Staying true to His Majesty's Oath of Accession to "continue, preserve and build upon the royal legacy", the **Khok Nong Na Model** expands on the New Theory to maximise both land use and water retention, both on the surface and underground, for agricultural production. The concept essentially calls for the building of a small weir on a plot of land that acts as a reservoir to prevent flooding during rainy season but also retains and acts as a source of water during dry season, both of which have been exacerbated by the adverse effects of climate change.



The key principle of the Khok Nong Na Model is to store sufficient water focused in three main areas: Khok (small ridge), Nong (weir), and Na (rice paddy). Source: Surin Provincial Agriculture and Cooperatives Office website

“Khok Nong Na” is an amalgamation of three Thai words that encapsulate key elements of the eponymous concept. First, a small ridge (Khok) is built of soil obtained through swamp digging or other substrate rich in nutrients suitable for growing fruit plants and trees, capable of withstanding local conditions, to generate food and household income. The next important element is a weir (Nong) that runs the length of the plot of land with sufficient depth to store water for agricultural use all year round while providing moisture through the breadth of the land. The last key element is the rice paddy (Na) on which organic rice farming should be practised with the aim of restoring essential nutrients to the soil so that yields are pesticide-free and safe for human consumption. The overall objective of the Khok Nong Na Model is to ensure food and financial security from the smallest units within society by becoming self-dependent while minimising susceptibility to externalities. This will in turn translate into food system resilience for the country.

The success of the model is now being scaled up throughout the country by various agencies including the Foreign Ministry’s Thailand International Cooperation Agency and the Community Development Department. Pilot projects and vocational programmes designed to acquaint those keen to explore the application of the Khok Nong Na Model of their own volition, have been implemented nationwide. The Community Lab Model aims to offer a better quality of life through the upskilling and reskilling of recent graduates, whose prospective jobs

COVID-19 has taken away, in 330 districts with over 3,300 participants. Similarly, the Household Lab Model has been converting plots of land belonging to almost 6,000 model farmers in more than 300 districts countrywide into Khok Nong Na model lands. Building upon his father's legacy, His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua has guided the Thai people to put into practical application the Khok Nong Na model of agricultural practices to ensure that food system resilience remains one of Thailand's crowning achievements in the years to come.



Overview of “Khok Nong Na Model”

Source: Narathiwat Science Centre for education

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03 WATER MANAGEMENT

The King and the Cloud – the story behind the Royal Rainmaking Project

Suvat Chirapant

Droughts have always prevailed in the plateau of Isan, the Thai nickname for the northeastern region of Thailand, where almost half of its population are farmers. Dependent on rainfall to sustain their crops, farmers would traditionally gather at the beginning of the wet season to shoot homemade *Bang Fai* rockets to the sky to ask the weather god to release the monsoon upon the earth. According to folklore, the higher and louder the rockets blast into the sky, the better. The deity will likely be more pleased with the offering and allow plentiful rainfall for the season's harvest.

On 14 November 1955, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great travelled through the dried-up Isan region during a royal visit. The then 28-year-old monarch noted the effects of water deficiency in the area, which caused low crop yields and subsequently, the people to suffer from chronic poverty and malnutrition. When the young King looked up to the sky in hope of finding a solution, he noticed that the weather was cloudy, yet it did not result into

precipitation. As every cloud has a silver lining, literally, King Bhumibol found one while watching the clouds - an idea of how to draw droplets from the clouds onto the farmlands.

“The idea of artificial rain came to me since 1955 when I visited Isan during the month of November. It was cloudy, yet the drought still persisted. So I had two ideas in mind. First was to build check dams, and second was how to bring the water from the clouds. Then I recalled that I had heard about rain-making before. Later, I mentioned it to Mom Rajawongse Debariddhi [an expert in agricultural engineering] that I have read from the books that it is possible to make artificial rain.” - (His Majesty King Bhumibol, interview with public officers from the Office of the Royal Development Project Board, 17 March 1986)

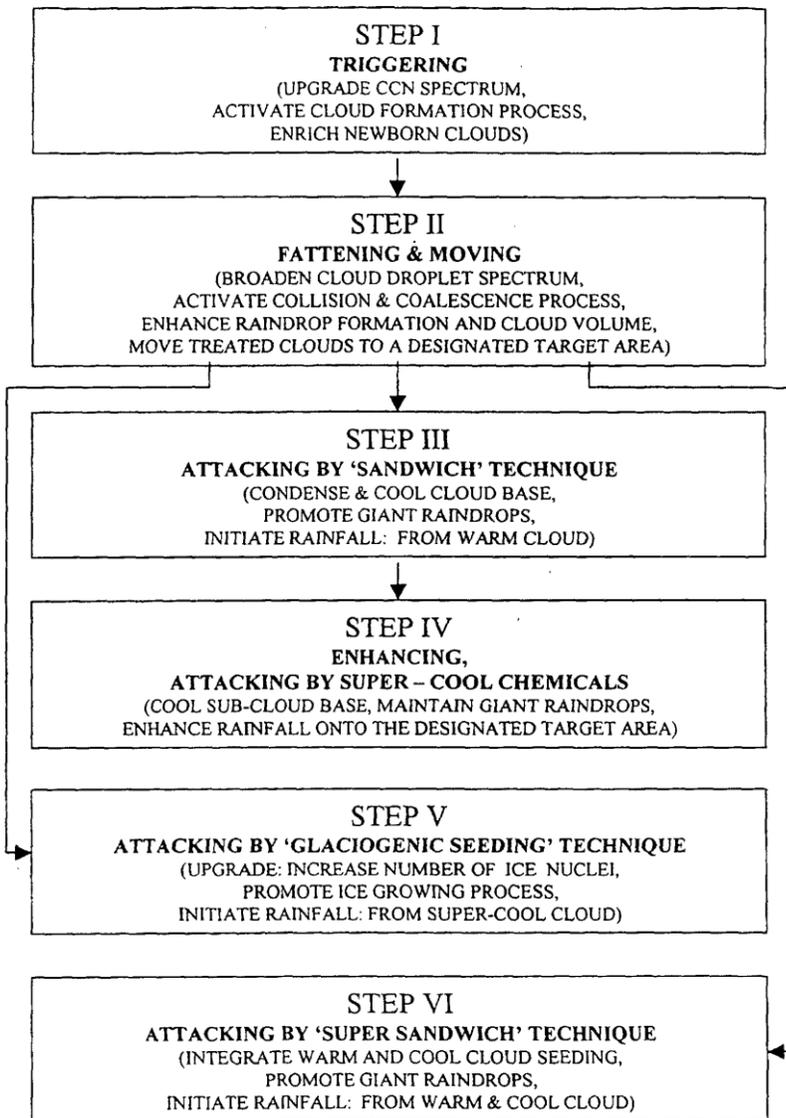
Having shown keen interest in science from a young age, the King was equipped with knowledge on technological research from his enrolment at the Faculty of Science at the University of Lausanne. After 14 years of research on meteorology and weather modification, the first experiment in making artificial rain was attempted on 1 July 1969. It was quite a remarkable success. After the fleet of aircraft had distributed dry-ice flakes over the top of the clouds, it started to rain within 15 minutes. This operation marked the dawn of what is now acknowledged by Thais as “The Royal Rainmaking Project”.

Since then, the project has gone through a series of transformations to perfect the artificial rainmaking process. His Majesty King Bhumibol recognized that a sufficient amount of moisture is crucial for rainmaking to be successful. Therefore, a new chemical formula was invented to maximise the humidity level for different types of clouds. The current technique of rainmaking now involves three processes. First, “agitating”, or to activate cloud formation by using salt and other chemical substances to accumulate humidity. Second, “fattening,” or to stimulate the accumulation of droplets in the cloud by scattering calcium chloride, and lastly “attacking,” to initiate rainfall from the heavy clouds by adding a mixture of salt and urea.



Planes drop the chemicals to seed clouds during an artificial rain-making operation.

Photo by Chaiwat Satyaem



*Weather modification by Royal Rainmaking Technology –
Patent 1491088
Source: European Patent Office website*

The project later manifested into the establishment of the Bureau of Royal Rainmaking and Agricultural Aviation in 1992 under the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. The rainmaking technique, however, is exclusive to Thailand. In 2001, King Bhumibol received recognition for the Royal Rainmaking Project from the EUREKA organization “for an invention that is beneficial to the world.” In 2003, King Bhumibol was granted a patent for weather modification from the European Patent Office. Ever since the invention caught the attention of the international community, many countries have sought cooperation with Thailand to apply this know-how in addressing their own drought problems. Jordan, for instance, was granted the use of the rainmaking technique in 2009, through an MOU for training and technology transfer. Other countries who have sought cooperation include Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Australia, and the Philippines. In Thailand, 14 November is now celebrated as “Father of Royal Rainmaking Day” to commemorate the day that inspired this invaluable initiative that has benefitted many countries around the world.

Even 50 years since the birth of the Royal Rainmaking Project, the operation still remains very much active today. There is no need to rely on weather gods, when citizens can submit a request for rain where needed, and rain shall be granted. The project enables Thai farmers to harvest without disruption, and to fill hydroelectric dams to help fulfill the increasing demand for electricity.

In 2013, the Bureau of Royal Rainmaking and Agricultural Aviation was upgraded to become the Department of Royal Rainmaking and Agricultural Aviation due to the significance of its mission and expanded responsibilities. In 2019, the Department conducted 1,673 rainmaking operations across the country. Almost 89 percent of the flights were successful, producing rainfall over 63 million hectares of forest, agricultural area, and reservoirs. The downpour of rain has increased the amount of water reserves by 2,595 million cubic metres. Still, the demand of artificial rain is expected to rise due to air pollution problems and the effects of global warming, and the Department is now exploring the use of rockets to help scatter the rainmaking substance over the cloud.

Today, under the guidance of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn, the legacy of the Royal Rainmaking Project continues to live on. Following in his father's footsteps, King Vajiralongkorn has also initiated various irrigation projects to address drought, such as the construction of six reservoirs in the western province of Ratchaburi, and the development of canal systems, check dams, and levees to assist farmers in the deep south of Thailand. This is one of the many testimonies of the vision, continued dedication, perseverance, and ingenuity of the monarchs in the Chakri Dynasty watching over the Thai people and the country.

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Securing a lifeline for the people

Dr. Sumet Tantivejkul

Fresh water is not only essential for life, but key to agricultural production and food security. Crop production, livestock farming, and food processing all need clean water in sufficient quantities. According to the World Bank, about 70 percent of the total water withdrawn worldwide is used to irrigate crops. But the reality of the supply side does not correspond to these needs. Although an astonishing 71 percent of the earth's surface is covered with water, only 2.5 percent of that is fresh and one percent of that, accessible.

For a predominantly agricultural country like Thailand, therefore, a high premium has always been placed on fresh water. More significantly, a lot of efforts have been invested in how to *manage* those resources to ensure that the people and the nation have the means to thrive.

It is little wonder therefore, why successive Thai monarchs have consistently expressed a keen interest on the issue. In fact, they have been personally and heavily engaged in advancing different methods—given the varied circumstance—of securing this 'lifeline' for their people.

Prior to 1857, it was about managing people to suit the water conditions—either moving people away from or closer to water sources. The conclusion of the Bowring Treaty in 1855 led to demands for rice exports that required enough water for irrigation. Therefore, King Mongkut focused on developing canal systems in the Chao Phraya River delta for both irrigation and transportation. King Chulalongkorn, or Rama V, followed suit by upgrading them into more systematic irrigation and drainage systems, which led to the establishment of the Canals Department in 1902. Under King Vajiravudh, the Canals Department became the Barrages Department in 1914, as it expanded its work to construct the first large-scale barrage across the Pasak River in Ayutthaya, named the Rama VI Barrage.



Rama VI Barrage/Dam, which began construction in late 1915 and was completed in December 1924. Its function is to supply water to 680,000 Rai of agricultural land in every part of the Rangsit canal area.

Source: Touronthai.com

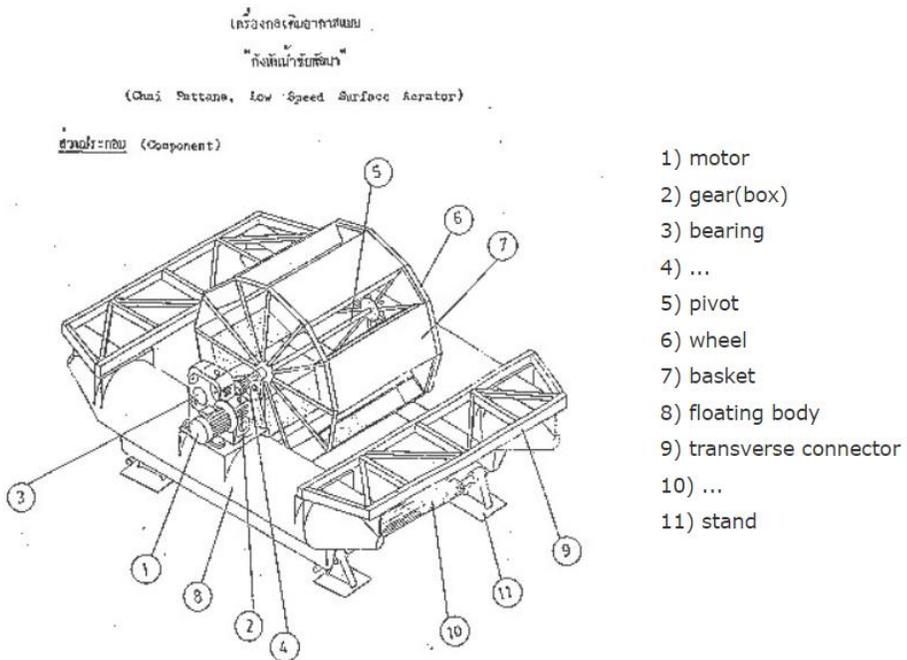
Post 1932, when Thailand became a Constitutional Monarchy, work in all areas was pursued slightly differently as the King no longer had executive power over state administration. This did not necessarily mean that the people's interests had suddenly changed overnight. Moreover, the work of the monarchs prior to this change spoke for itself. The Thai monarchs had built up a strong bond between the monarchy and the people and fostered a genuine trust in an institution that had for centuries, spared no effort to develop and advance the nation into the future. So the monarchy was able to rally and retain full public support for their public interest endeavours, in a manner that was complementary to the government's efforts, without being tied to party politics or factional interests.

Indeed, when King Bhumibol acceded to the throne in 1946, Thailand was already a leading rice exporter and rice farmers accounted for around 80 percent of the country's 17 million people. But by that time, the impact of the perennial paradox of experiencing both drought and flood seasons had become more severe due to excessive and uncontrolled timber logging. For farmers, dealing with dry and cracked land that was unsuitable for growing crops was just as painful as having crops almost ready for cultivation completely submerged under flood water.

When the King and Queen visited the Isan region in 1955, the Northeastern region of Thailand was plagued with drought. Rainfall could only support one single annual rice crop. The King witnessed the

problems experienced by the farmers first-hand and it inspired him to devote his attention and energy to achieving effective water resource management for Thai farmers everywhere. He would go on to instill water conservation and awareness in his children.

For the rest of his 70-year reign, the King engaged in countless projects related to water in different aspects. He spent almost 15 years developing a working formula for artificial rain to address drought and improve water resource management. He also invented the patented Chaipattana Aerator, a low-cost mechanical device for treating wastewater.



Drawing of Chaipattana Aerator.
Source: <https://www.changpuak.ch>

In the North, the King focused on preserving watershed areas and creating check dams, such as the Mae Kuang Udom Thara Dam in Chiang Mai. In the northeast, the work was concentrated more on setting up a water network system, such as the 740-metre long water delivery system that siphons water from Huai Pai Reservoir in Mukdahan to Lam Payang Reservoir in Kalasin. This project benefited 736 hectares of irrigable area, increased glutinous rice production from 270 kilogrammes per rai to 480 kilogrammes per rai and made year-round farming possible. In the south, projects such as the Bang Nara River Basin Development in Narathiwat effectively addressed the problem of drought, flood, saline, and acidic water.



(From left to right) Huai Pai Reservoir in Mukdahan, water delivery system, and Lam Payang Reservoir in Kalasin. Source: Tourism Authority of Thailand and Office of Royal Development Projects Board

Having travelled throughout the country, no one understood better than the King that there was never one formula or one solution to address all needs. So he dedicated his time to studying each locality in depth in order to come up with a tailor-made solution for different regions, and placed local residents at the centre of his approach. He considered the social geography of the area, the culture, traditions and lifestyles of the local people. Most importantly, the people had to be included in whatever solution was pursued in order to nurture a sense of ownership. The King was convinced this was the only way to ensure the solution was sustainable and he passed on these lessons to his children.

Since he was Crown Prince, King Maha Vajiralongkorn learned about the importance of water resource management from his late father, and has continued to treasure, preserve and build on the Royal Development Projects initiated by King Bhumibol. He completed several of them, including the construction of 7 reservoirs around Pasak Jolasid Dam, as well as expanded the irrigation network to cover more agricultural areas. In Chanthaburi, the King alleviated water problems petitioned by the villagers with the Royally-Initiated Weir Construction Project at Khao Daeng Pattana Village, which increased water supply for 320 hectares of farm land. In 2017, the King also commissioned the Royal Guard Units, related government agencies and teams of volunteers to remove garbage and weeds clogging the canals in various communities, which

was essential for flood water drainage in the Bangkok and Metropolitan area.



*Weir at Khao Daeng Pattana Village.
Source: salika.co*

Princess Bajrakitiyabha, the King's first born, has also taken an interest in complementing water management through her 'Friends in Need (of "PA") Volunteers Foundation' – PA being her nickname. Through this foundation, she set up telemetering systems in 80 watershed areas in 11 provinces, using a comprehensive management approach involving the local community. The new telemetry collects data from real time sensors, processes the information, and provides warnings. This timely warning enables reservoir operators to reduce water levels, people to reinforce their homes, and authorities to be prepared. The Foundation plans to install another 510 telemetering systems across Thailand.



*(From left to right) Automated Telemetry Station in Pongyeang sub-district, Mae Rim District, Chiang Mai Province and interface of ThaiWater mobile-application that has been integrated for general use.
Source: Matichon*

To this day, the lifeline of the people continues to occupy an important place in the work of the Thai monarchy, as out of 4,877 Royal Development Projects, nearly 70% of them, or 3,386, are water resource development projects.

But the work is far from done. According to the Global Climate Risk Index, Thailand ranks 9th in countries most affected by extreme weather events

between 2000–2019. Furthermore, research conducted by Thammasat University found that the 6 provinces of Loei, Udon Thani, Sakon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, Roi Et and Ubon Ratchathani are at the risk of repeated severe floods, while Khon Kaen, Mukdahan, Chaiyaphum, Nakhon Ratchasima and Surin are prone to repeated drought. Thailand’s current efforts on preventing floods and drought will not be enough. Every year, drought affects about 9.71 million people and 411,360 hectares of irrigable land, causing about 20.34 million USD of damage. Floods, on the other hand, cause damage to 1.2 million hectares of farmland worth 167 million USD annually, with 4.5 million people in 63 provinces affected.

All sectors in Thailand have to work together and harder on sustainable and effective water resource management, and look into using new technology. Indeed, the King has already commissioned further studies into utilising the full potential of the river basin. Some agencies and academic institutions have already begun looking into how to use water for irrigation more efficiently. Indeed, it is equally important to raise public awareness of the issue, so that every person living in Thailand may use water and water ways sensibly and sustainably, and help to nurture this lifeline for generations to come.

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***“From the sky,
onto the mountains,
and into the oceans”*: How
Thailand’s water management
in agriculture can support
the global goals**

Sarun Charoensuwan

In September 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted a plan for achieving a better future for all, laying out a path to end extreme poverty, fight inequality, and protect our planet through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which committed to leave no one behind.

But multiple challenges remain to be tackled before the world can achieve these goals. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), by 2050 the world will need to produce 60 % more food to feed a population of 9.3 billion. This will not be an easy task if climate change continues to put more pressure on the quality and availability of natural resources. For this reason, efficient water management, particularly in agriculture, will be key.

For Thailand, agriculture employs one third of the population, and much of this sector depends on the amount of annual rainfall. Thai farmers' reliance on seasonal precipitation is reflected in several Thai water-based ceremonies. One notable example is the "Boon Bung Fai" festival during which villagers in the northeastern region propel homemade rockets into the sky to please the Rain God and plea for a favourable amount of rainfall.



Traditional Boon Bung Fai (Rocket Festival)

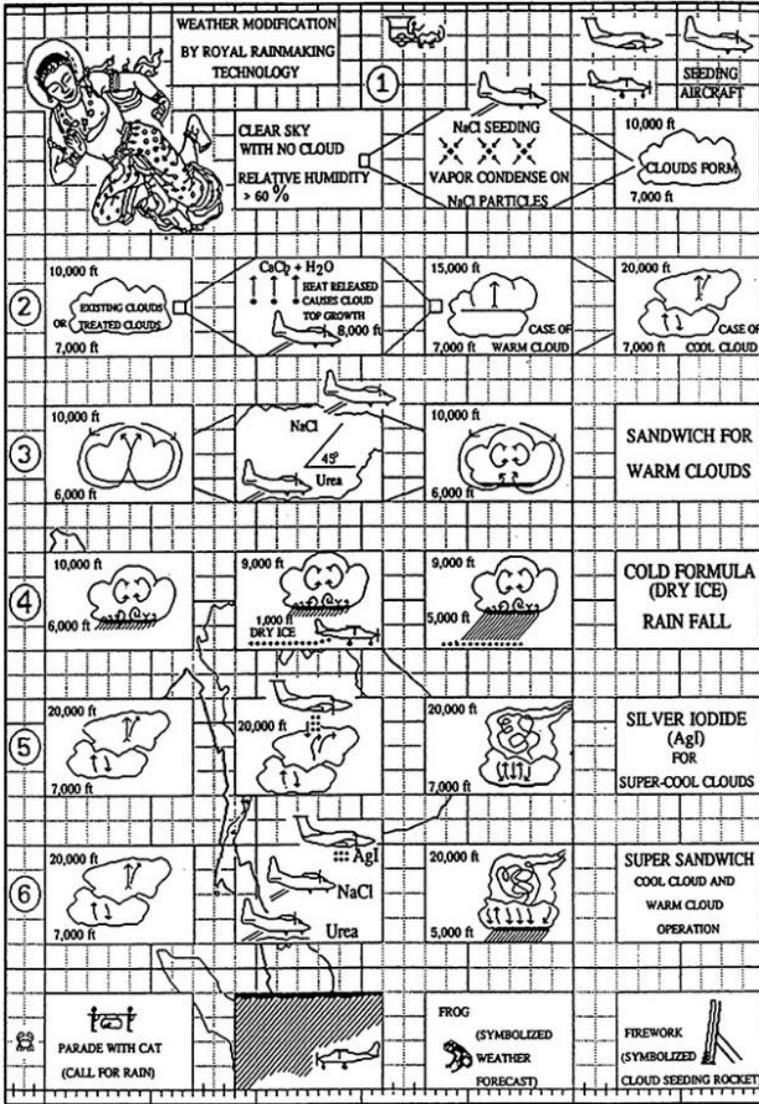
Source: <http://www.watpamahachai.net/>

It was this very issue that captured the attention of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great soon after his accession to the throne in 1946. His Majesty's determination to address this issue made agricultural water management an integral part of Thailand's development policy long before the adoption of the SDGs, as evident in his speech at Chitralada Villa on 17 March 1986 ***"...It is crucial that there must be water for consumption***

and water for agriculture because life is there. With water, humans can survive. Without water, humans cannot survive. Without electricity, humans can survive. With electricity but no water, humans cannot survive...”

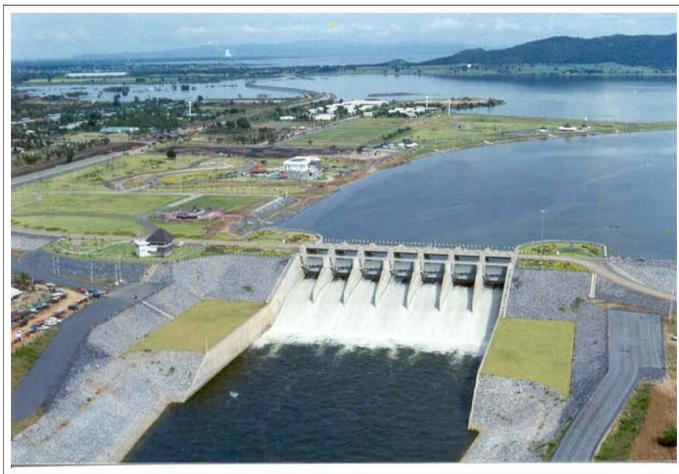
Many Thais can recall almost-daily news reports about the King’s visits to remote areas of Thailand impacted by droughts or floods in an attempt to find appropriate solutions. Dr. Sumet Tantivejkul, Secretary-General of the Chaipattana Foundation, summarised the framework of King Bhumibol’s water management principles as “From the sky, onto the mountains, and into the oceans”.

From the sky: King Bhumibol established a “Royal Rainmaking Project” to increase water supply both for farming and generating electricity. The project started in 1955 when His Majesty visited dried-up areas in the northeastern provinces and noticed that the weather conditions were cloudy, yet not producing any precipitation. This observation inspired His Majesty to develop and perfect techniques for artificial rainmaking. Over the course of 50 years, “Royal Rainmaking” operations across the country have produced sufficient amount of water for the farmers to harvest without disruption and for hydroelectric dams to function properly.



Weather Modification by Royal Rainmaking Technology
 Source: Google Patents

Onto the mountains represented the reservoirs and irrigation systems initiated by King Bhumibol to ensure year-round availability of water for agriculture and daily usage. They were also employed to alleviate the severity of floods by releasing runoff of excess water “into the oceans” at the appropriate moments. Pasak Jolasid Dam, Thailand’s largest earthfill dam, is one of His Majesty’s most widely known initiatives to address flood and drought in Pasak River, one of the main tributaries of the Chao Phraya River that encompasses around 352,000 hectares of farmland, including in Greater Bangkok and its adjacent areas. It was designed to collect and store surplus water from the upper reaches of the river during the rainy season as well as to reduce the likelihood of flooding in the lower parts.



Pasak Jolasid Dam

Source: Office of the Royal Development Projects Board website

Besides regulating the flow of water, several royal projects successfully employed modern irrigation techniques in combination with soil and forest rehabilitation. A notable example is Hub Kapong Royal Project Learning Centre in Cha-Am, Phetchaburi Province. The project began in 1964 when King Bhumibol witnessed the hardship of local villagers and farmers who lacked capital and land. His Majesty then decided to set aside 1,932 hectares of degraded forest in the area for rehabilitation.



Hub Kapong Royal Project Learning Centre
Source: Thailand Sustainable Development Foundation
website

The project boasts unique international cooperation with the Government of Israel, the world's expert in agricultural technologies such as drip irrigation and greenhouse systems which have successfully transformed many parts of Israeli deserts to become arable. Over time, degraded soil in Hub Kapong has been gradually rehabilitated. Nowadays, local farmers can grow a variety of fruits and vegetables

that would have been absolutely impossible 50 years ago, such as asparagus, tomatoes, and cantaloupe. The project also provided dwellers with infrastructure, knowledge in community management, and training in the operations of cooperatives for a comprehensive improvement in quality of life.

After immense progress, Hub Kapong continues to develop new sustainable agricultural practices. It adopted King Bhumibol's "New Theory" model, which divides land into four parts: 30% for storing irrigation water, 30% for growing rice, 30% for growing a mixture of plants, and the remaining 10% for residential and livestock areas. This concept allows households to become self-reliant, and reduces risks from cultivating a single cash crop. Nowadays, the "New Theory" model has been developed into "Khok Nong Na" model, championed by His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn, by incorporating indigenous farming wisdom into the "New Theory" model so that prescribed solutions fit the needs and conditions of each locality.

Like Hub Kapong, several of King Bhumibol's royal initiatives on water management were initially conducted as a pilot study in one small area, before expanding to other sites to examine its validity in various environments. To date, the knowledge derived from these projects have been implemented by farmers across Thailand with impressive results, attesting to King Bhumibol's legacy which continues to be further developed and built upon by His Majesty

King Maha Vajiralongkorn. The outcomes of these initiatives and projects may very well offer an answer to those wishing for rainfall, as well as provide a guiding light on the path towards achieving the SDGs.

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04

HUMANITARIANISM

Perhaps What the World Needs is a Little “Kamlangjai” (Inspiration of the Heart)

Dr. Phiset Sa-ardyen

In today’s increasingly globalised world where news from every corner is reported at a click, we are often inundated by a myriad of issues facing humanity. At times, the plethora of negative headlines may make one question whether our world is becoming increasingly tumultuous, or are we simply better-informed given the advancement of digital information technology. Nonetheless, the thought of the world never having made it ‘past its past’, with issues like gender-inequality, poverty and sexual abuse constantly reported, easily leaves one feeling disheartened and uninspired.

The rise of this digital information age, however, has helped bring long overdue attention to various issues such as the #MeToo movement, which gained traction after a tweet in 2017, exposing the gender-based violence and harassment women face around the world.

But away from the eyes of the mainstream, there remain an enormity of issues that women face in the 21st century. Some issues are hopelessly perpetual, persisting behind locked doors.

In 2021, the Penal Reform International reported a 17% increase in the number of female inmates globally since 2010. In facilities historically designed for men, women in incarceration are forgotten and are exposed to a wide range of issues specific to women, including pregnancy, lack of gender-specific healthcare, violence, mental and sexual abuse. A fact often unreported, is that many female inmates committed only minor offences and are often victims of abuse themselves. Conceivably, given the lack of human rights afforded to this group of women worldwide, the words of Nelson Mandela may still ring true, that ***“it is said that no one truly knows a nation until one has been inside its jails. A nation should not be judged by how it treats its highest citizens, but its lowest ones.”***

Against the backdrop of despair and silent neglect, it is often said that one can always find hope and inspiration. On a summer day in July 2001, a female inmate at the Central Women’s Correctional Institution in Bangkok told a young lady visitor of the concerns of raising her child in prison. The hardships and vulnerability of the female inmate, and the lack of care and opportunities for the innocent child, left an impact on the young visitor - Her Royal Highness Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol of Thailand.

After receiving her Doctorate degree in Law (J.S.D) from Cornell Law School, and earning a wealth of experience in criminal justice and the rule of law from

working as a public prosecutor in Thailand, the princess launched the ‘Kamlangjai Project’ (Inspire Project) in Thailand from her personal funds in 2006. Based on the premise of upholding human rights, the project created the first instances whereby female and pregnant inmates were accorded assistance and support on a range of gender-specific issues such as pregnancy, healthcare, and childcare to allow them to adequately nurture their infants.

Over the years, the program has been implemented in various correctional facilities in Thailand, and has embarked on a long-term approach in inspiring thousands of female inmates in reintegrating into society, through a development-led approach based upon the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great.

The effects of the Kamlangjai Project was not just confined to Thailand. Having advocated for the rights of the vulnerable both as a public prosecutor and a diplomat, it was recognised that change for women can only be realised if both the social and legal spheres evolve in tandem.

In 2008, the princess presented the Kamlangjai Project at the margins of the 17th Session of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice (CCPCJ) at the United Nations in Vienna, setting off a catalyst for Thailand’s multifaceted global campaign for the conception and adoption of the world’s first set of specific rules on the fair treatment of women offenders. Within the

multilateral fora, she spearheaded the ‘Enhancing the Lives of Female Inmates (ELFI)’ campaign, achieving an international consensus to update norms set by the 1995 UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.



Representatives of international organisations visited the Thonburi Women Correctional Institution, on 29 June 2017, which operates under the Bangkok Rules.

Source: Kamlangjai website

Under her impetus, Thailand emerged as a leading player in the UN’s drafting process, pushing the multilateral drive for the rights of female inmates worldwide. In a mere two years of rigorous political and legal lobbying, the UN Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders (Bangkok Rules) were adopted by the 65th UN General Assembly in 2010, marking a

legal paradigm shift within the international community and embedding the first ever UN standards on the treatment of female prisoners.

With the Bangkok Rules, no longer are women in incarceration the world's forgotten population. With provisions ranging from prohibition of punishment by close confinement for breastfeeding mothers, support for mental healthcare, and protection for those reporting abuse, the Bangkok Rules established a set of actionable standards for all nations to adhere to. While work continues to be done worldwide, it is indisputable that such efforts have had a tangible outcome, inspiring and directly benefitting the lives of countless women and children throughout the globe.

Inspired by the examples shown by the princess, the Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ) continues to mainstream women's rights and dignity vis-à-vis criminal justice and the rule of law. With strength and compassion, one may find hope in her words, that "We must inculcate our children of today on gender issues so as to create the next generation of men who respect women. But above all, we must inspire those with a painful past to have courage to live with hope."



*Wooden bead and crochet necklace hand-made by female inmates under Kamlangjai project can be found in Shopee, a popular online shopping application.
Source: Kamlangjai.Inspire facebook page*

In revisiting Mandela’s quote, perhaps today, nations—or rather, the world—can be judged in a better light than yesterday. In this increasingly globalised world, where digital technology has overwhelmed us with negative headlines on a daily basis, perhaps what the world needs is a little hope and more “Kamlangjai” or inspiration of the heart.

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“We help Thai Red Cross, Thai Red Cross helps us”: Looking back at how the Royal Family has nurtured the Thai Red Cross Society’s humanitarian mission

Tej Bunnag

“#BeHumanKind: Believe in the power of kindness” was the theme for this year when we celebrated the Red Cross and Red Crescent Day on 8 May 2022. As we reflect on kindness, we wish also to remind ourselves of how Thailand became a member of the International Red Cross Movement.

Since its inception in 1893, the Thai Red Cross Society has pursued a humanitarian mission to provide medical care and social welfare support to those in need. The Society was born from the conflict between Siam and France over the Left Bank of the Mekong River, resulting in a number of injuries and fatalities. At the time, there was no organisation to provide assistance or relief for the casualties. Thanphuying Plian Phasakaravongse, a lady of the court, urged Thai women to raise funds and collect items, such as medicines and medical equipments, which could be sent to help the injured soldiers. Lady

Plian thought that there should be an organisation to care for them and affected civilians in the way that the Red Cross was doing and proposed the idea to Queen Savang Vadhana, who submitted it to His Majesty King Chulalongkorn. The King approved and commended the relief efforts as “a good initiative that was suitable as a national role model.” He granted permission for the establishment of the “Red Council of Siam,” the predecessor to the Thai Red Cross Society, on 26 April 1893. His Majesty also donated personal funds of 80,000 baht to help launch the first fund-raising for the “Red Council of Siam,” together with an official statement declaring that “my life and property are united with Siam.” This statement was closely followed by royal permission for a palace to be used for the construction of a Red Cross Council Hospital in June 1893.

Once the conflict between Siam and France came to an end, His Majesty King Chulalongkorn asked one of his sons, Prince Nakornchaisri Suradech, to develop and institutionalise the Red Cross Council of Siam and hospital as a permanent organisation to further its humanitarian mission. His Majesty sadly passed away before the project was completed. His Heir, King Vajiravudh, together with his siblings, saw the project through by making donations to the existing Red Cross Council Fund to build a hospital on the King’s private property on Rama IV Road. Prince Nakornchaisri Suradech supervised the construction of this hospital. The King Chulalongkorn Memorial Hospital, Thai Red Cross Society, as it is known today, continues to be one of the country’s best

hospitals with state-of-the-art medical facilities to serve the general public.



*Office of the Siam Red Cross Society (1914-1932)
Source: Thai Red Cross Society Website*

When asked about what comes to mind when they hear about the Thai Red Cross Society today, most people would think of it as a charitable humanitarian organization. Starting from medical care for wounded soldiers and civilians during war time, the Thai Red Cross Society has since expanded to include many other missions especially since Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, the Queen Mother, assumed the presidency of the Society in 1956.

Her Majesty Queen Sirikit is devoted to the humanitarian mission of the Thai Red Cross Society. In May 1979, when tens of thousands of Cambodian refugees fled into Thailand's Trat province, she rushed to Trat to view the situation firsthand. Then, in her capacity as President of the Thai Red Cross Society, and against the government policy of the time, she established the Khao Lan Thai Red Cross Centre to provide shelter, food, and medical care for the refugees, which became their refuge for many years, until peace returned to Cambodia in 1991.



Khao Lan Thai Red Cross Centre on Trat-Khlong Yai Highway at Km. 48, formerly a facility to assist Cambodian refugees from 1978 - 1986. Source: Thailand Trip Tour Website

In addition to humanitarian assistance for refugees and displaced persons, the Thai Red Cross Society also provides other services to strengthen Thailand's public healthcare. The government has assigned the Society to be responsible for the National Blood Centre. Thai Red Cross officials and volunteers also pack relief supplies to victims of natural disasters whenever they occur.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Thai Red Cross Society played an active role in the national vaccination drive. In joining the national vaccination campaign, the society consistently encouraged everyone to get vaccinated as soon as possible, Thai nationals and foreigners alike, including migrant workers and other vulnerable groups in Thailand, in line with the government's policy of "leaving no one behind." As of May 2022, the Thai Red Cross Society has administered 1,816,316 doses of COVID-19 vaccines, free of charge, which cover migrant workers, as well as displaced persons on the western border of the country, underscoring Thailand's long humanitarian tradition.

In addition to the vaccination drive, Thai Red Cross officials and volunteers open community kitchens in various parts of the country. The aim is to alleviate people's hardships from the pandemic by setting up temporary kitchens in public areas in various provinces in a continuous effort to distribute aid to as many people as possible.



The Thai Red Cross Society and its network partners provide the proactive COVID-19 vaccination rollout for displaced persons at the Ban Mae La Temporary Shelter, Mae La Sub district, Tha Song Yang District, Tak Province

Source: Thai Red Cross Society Website

“...The mission of the Thai Red Cross Society is not only to assist people in society who should receive assistance, but is related to assisting people who are in distress in general, whereby work is truly undertaken for humanitarianism. We see it as the duty for all human beings to help their fellow human beings and those who work at the Thai Red Cross Society understand this mission very well...”

Words spoken by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, who has served as the Executive Vice President of the Thai Red Cross Society since 1977 and has continued the Society’s legacy of

humanitarianism, especially the sense of duty and compassion towards fellow human beings, and has integrated community service into everyday lives.

As the Thai Red Cross Society under the Royal Patronage of His Majesty the King celebrated its 129th anniversary on 26 April 2022, it continues to expand and strengthen its humanitarian operations and to nurture the spirit of community service with faith in the power of kindness in Thai society.

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05 FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Grand Tour That Saved a Nation: King Chulalongkorn's European Sojourn as a Lesson in Soft Power

Kitti Wasinondh

At this year's United Nations General Assembly, the world witnessed the unrelenting force of South Korean soft power, as members of the K-Pop sensation BTS performed their megahit "Permission to Dance" at the General Assembly Hall. In spreading the message about the UN Sustainable Development Goals to millions of their fans worldwide, BTS did their part in boosting South Korea's image as a global leader of sustainability, complementing the country's role as convener of the Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G) summits.

"Soft power", perhaps less tangible than "hard power", has become an important source and tool of influence for countries seeking to elevate their status in world affairs. Rather than using military force or economic clout to coerce others to give into your wants, it is much less expensive to make yourself liked by others and get them to do as you please. The term, as coined by Joseph Nye, helped explain the triumph of democracy over communism in the late 1980s. At that time, blue jeans, smuggled Bruce

Springsteen cassette tapes, and Voice of America broadcasts traversed the Iron Curtain and spread the idea of freedom and democracy.

These days, a nation's soft power continues to be associated with the popularity of its culture, economic performance, and its positive foreign policy contributions. Getting a lot of "likes" reflects a country's relative standing or ranking on the world stage and this is an incredibly valuable asset. In fact, governments spend millions of dollars on nation branding to manage and improve its image.

Today, Thailand performs rather well on the soft power scale, coming in at number 33 out of 100 nations surveyed by Global Soft Power Index 2021. But what is perhaps more remarkable is that this concept of soft power had much earlier applications in Thailand, and offers a very plausible response to the often posed question of why Thailand was able to remain the only country in Southeast Asia that was never colonised.

When Siam faced colonialist pressure that threatened its independence in the nineteenth century, its wise king had the foresight that improving the national image and winning over influential friends was far more cost-effective in safeguarding the nation's sovereignty than going to war.

Indeed, since the early days of his reign, King Chulalongkorn understood that modernization was essential for Siam to escape the onslaught of

colonialism. Modernization was carried out not only to improve Siam's infrastructure, governance, and its people's quality of life, but also to improve the country's image and stature. The King employed several western advisors and professionals to assist him in carrying out several impressive projects, from government, education and social reforms, to modernization of transports and telecom, intent on bringing Siam up to standard with "civilised" nations.

Still, the rapid modernization of Siam was not enough to counter the mounting expansionist threats from the European powers. During 1886-1896, Siam had to face a number of crises. In 1893, France sent gunboats up the Chao Phraya River, demanding compensation from Siam for skirmishes that resulted in the death of French troops. Siam painfully ceded substantial territories, east of the Mekong River, paid 3 million francs, and handed over temporary control of the port of Chanthaburi to France as collateral. Three years later in 1896, Britain and France signed the Anglo-French Agreement, essentially making Siam a "buffer" between French and British colonial interests in Southeast Asia. However, the terms of the agreement merely stated that France and Britain would not violate Siam's sovereignty without the prior consent of the other party. This declaration did not offer a firm guarantee for independence, but rather indicated that France and Britain would not go to war over Siam.

In the following year, King Chulalongkorn embarked on his first historic European sojourn. It was uncustomary for the King to go abroad, so palace officials told the Thai public that the King was travelling to cultivate diplomatic ties and learn about western civilisation. However, the European press had a different take on his visit and reported extensively that the King was seeking supports from major European powers to maintain Siam's sovereignty.

As one of the first Asian monarchs, along with the Ottoman Sultan and the Shah of Persia, to visit all of the important capitals of Europe, King Chulalongkorn and his trip were the subject of much curiosity and fascination. His affable manner and fluency in the English language made him well-respected and admired among the European nobility and aristocracy. European newspapers and magazines followed his movements closely and reported on his every engagement at both official and social events.

The King was not an inexperienced traveller. In his youth, he first travelled abroad at the age of 18 to Singapore and Java in 1871. He later visited India in 1872, where he was given the highest honour and was invited to observe a large-scale military exercise outside of Delhi. His itinerary was closely chronicled in the press of the time. Newspapers even discussed minutiae, such as the excitement of shopkeepers keen on displaying their wares to the King's entourage.

The flurry of press interest during his visit to India did not go unnoticed. For his first trip to Europe, the King's visit was carefully and strategically planned to create the right impressions, putting the Thai monarchy on par with European dynasties, and also to send a direct message to those who threatened Siam's sovereignty.

King Chulalongkorn made sure to call on his powerful and sympathetic friends, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Prussia and Tsar Nicholas II of Russia, well before his visit to France and Britain. He also paid a visit to the elderly European statesman Otto von Bismarck at his residence, which generated much media attention throughout the continent. The King's trust in his friendly relations with Prussia led to the employment of many Germans in strategic sectors in the modernization of Siam. Among them were Karl Bethge, the first Governor of the State Railway of Thailand and Theodor Collmann, the first inspector of the Post and Telegraph Department of Thailand. Such appointments should have raised eyebrows under the watchful gaze of the British and the French.

Meanwhile, the king's close personal ties with the Royal House of Russia, where he sent one of his sons, Prince Chakrabongse, to study for eight years, directly helped Siam vis-a-vis French and British colonialist ambitions. The Franco-Russian alliance also worked well in Siam's favour. After establishing diplomatic ties with Siam during King Chulalongkorn's visit to St. Petersburg in 1897, Tsar Nicholas II sent one of his best envoys to Bangkok.

Alexander Olarovsky, who served as the first Consul-General of Russia to Siam, was instrumental in mending Franco-Siamese relations and persuaded France to return Chanthaburi to Siam. Furthermore, as Russia was at odds with Britain in the Afghan ‘Great Game’, the former also had a direct interest in preventing Siam from falling under Britain’s sphere of influence.

In Europe, King Chulalongkorn soon became widely recognized as one of the most prominent monarchs of the world in his days. Despite the difficult relations that Siam had with Britain and France, King Chulalongkorn took great care to project an image of amity with their heads of state, thereby creating favourable sentiments among the general public. In England, he was hosted at Buckingham Palace and had lunch with Queen Victoria at Osborne House, her private residence on the Isle of Wight. In republican France, he was received with all the pomp and circumstance befitting a visiting European monarch, despite initial doubts that there could be protests staged against the Siamese sovereign.

Although King Chulalongkorn could not win over the powerful colonists with any resources of “hard power”, he showed the world that, with the right combination of diplomatic acumen and effective public communication, he could attract influential European leaders, and even the Western public, to support his cause. On the other hand, the King’s efficacious diplomacy played a pivotal role in securing Thailand’s stature as an independent nation

throughout history, and apparently, has brought about a timeless lesson that attests to the value and effectiveness of “soft power”.’

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Three Decades After: Reflections from the visit of His Majesty the King of Thailand to Bangladesh

Makawadee Sumitmor

Three decades ago, His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn visited Bangladesh in 1992 while he was still the Crown Prince of Thailand. It was the first visit of a Thai royal since Their Majesties King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great and Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother came to Dhaka and Chattogram in 1962. The Crown Prince acceded to the throne in 2016 and the royal visit remains a testimony to the cordial bonds between both nations.

After establishing diplomatic relations in 1972, Thailand had the honour to welcome two Bangladeshi Presidents in 1979 and 1988 while General Prem Tinsulanonda was the first Thai Prime Minister to visit Bangladesh in 1983.

The visit of the then Crown Prince was initially scheduled in 1991 but a mutually convenient time could not be finalised so it was postponed to the following year.

The Bangladeshi government recommended that the trip take place in the period from October to December when the country enjoys the best of its cooler months. Finally, the date was agreed on 16 – 21 January 1992.

Sites to visit in the programme were divided into two groups. The first one encapsulated the rich history and culture of Bangladesh while the second group reflected the personal interest of the royal guest.

As Thailand is a de facto Buddhist nation with a majority of its population practising Buddhism, the host arranged for the King to visit many Buddhist sites in Bangladesh.

This includes Paharpur Monastery, the largest ancient Buddhist monastery in the country and a UNESCO world heritage, as well as Mahasthangarh archaeological site. He also paid a visit to Dharmarajika Bauddha Vihara Monastery, the first Buddhist vihara in Dhaka.

In 2010, eighteen years later, the King granted royal patronage in presenting a 38-foot standing Buddha image to the monastery, with support from Songmetta Vanaram Temple in Thailand. The image stands gracefully by the pond of the temple, giving blessings to all visitors and became a landmark of the sanctuary.

Indeed, Buddhism is one of the cultural dimensions that link Bangladesh and Thailand closer.

Bangladesh is one of the few countries where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand presents royally bestowed Kathin robes to monks at a Buddhist temple after the annual lent. This practice was initiated by Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, former Foreign Minister of Thailand and Secretary-General of ASEAN, in order to strengthen cultural connection with Buddhist communities abroad. It should be emphasised that Dr. Surin is a devout Muslim who had a vision to drive Thai foreign policy in all frontiers.

In addition to religious places, the King visited sites of historical value and natural beauty, namely the National Martyrs' Memorial at Savar where he planted a tree as well as the famous Sundarbans. The itinerary indicated that on 19 January 1992, he travelled on a vessel named Shandhani to visit the largest mangrove in the world and had lunch on board.

The latter group of places in the programme are military-related institutions since the King is a trained pilot with military background. He attended the Royal Military College in Duntroon, Australia and then the Command and General Staff College of Thailand.

During his visit to Bangladesh, the King had the opportunity to meet the Chief-of-Staff of the army, navy and air force as well as to see their respective facilities. On 19 January 1992, he received a briefing on the air force of Bangladesh at Matiur Rahman Air

Base in Jessore and visited the pilot training centre. In Chattogram, the programme included the Flotilla Base Area where the royal guest went aboard the BNS Ali Haider.

Exchange of visits can make friends become close friends and enable nations to develop a deeper sense of understanding. Once both sides feel at ease with one another, the potential for new areas of collaboration will follow. Milestones in the relations between Thailand and Bangladesh have been adorned with various levels of visits that helped reinforce the dynamics of interactions and paved the way for multi-dimensional cooperation.

Three decades after His Majesty the King of Thailand visited Bangladesh as the Crown Prince, history speaks clearly for itself on how the existing friendship flourished from these auspicious beginnings. And the best way to commemorate such success is to carry on the mutual respect, amity and sincerity onwards to the next generation.

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The Visit that Never Ended: Legacy of the State Visit to Dhaka and Chattogram of Their Majesties King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great and Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother in 1962

Makawadee Sumitmor

Stepping inside the main building of Dharmarajika Monastery near Kamalapur Railway Station in Dhaka, visitors would pass a corridor of photos and portraits of monks and dignitaries. One of them is a black and white photo of Their Majesties King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great and Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother during their visit to the monastery in 1962 that will be proudly shown to every Thai delegation.

That momentous event was part of a brief yet historic visit of the royal Thai couple to Dhaka and Chattogram on 20 – 22 March 1962, and its sixtieth anniversary is marked this year.

When a head of state pays a state visit to another country, it signifies an exchange of friendship and goodwill between the peoples of the two nations at

the highest level. In the reign of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great, he preferred staying with his subjects in the remote corners of the kingdom to uplift their welfare. Nonetheless, he recognized the importance of cultivating ties with foreign friends and visited 30 countries and territories, most of them in the 1960s.

After acceding to the throne in 1946 at the age of eighteen, his first overseas trip did not happen until 1959 when he travelled to the then South Vietnam. After a tour to several European countries, Their Majesties finally came to Dhaka and Chattogram in 1962. It was the first time that the King of Thailand was welcomed in a land that would later become Bangladesh. However, it was his grandfather, His Majesty King Chulalongkorn, who was the first Siamese sovereign to set foot in the Bengal during his visit to India in 1871 that started in Kolkata.

The host arranged the programme for the King and Queen of Thailand to gain authentic Bengal experiences in as many aspects as possible. For instance, the citizens' receptions were held in Dhaka's Ramna Park and in Chattogram, and the royal guests were invited to Adamjee Jute Mills which was the world's largest jute mill at that time, before embarking on the Mary Anderson yacht to Narayanganj.

Her Serene Highness Princess Vibhavadi Rangsit, lady-in-waiting of Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother, noted in her memoir that a reception was held on the

deck of the yacht which has no engine of its own and was towed by a smaller vessel named M.V. Mary.

Prior to boarding the yacht, the local authorities also displayed Bengal fish like sea bass, snapper and magur for Their Majesties to see the rich marine resources of the country.

Besides photographs, not so many places and objects related to the visit remain intact until these days or could be re-visited. Both the Adamjee Jute Mills and the Mary Anderson have ceased to exist. The mill was nationalized and then closed down in 2002. It is now the site of the Adamjee Export Processing Zone. The Mary Anderson yacht was given to Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation, a state-owned tourism corporation in 1978, which used it as a floating restaurant until it was burned down by fire in 2014.

But it is the spirit of lasting friendship and mutual understanding that matters more. In fact, such sentiments have been constantly nurtured and solidified since then until the independence of Bangladesh and the ensuing decades. Thirty years after the visit, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn followed the footsteps of his royal parents in visiting Bangladesh in 1992 and had the opportunity to see several historical and natural sites of the country, thus adding a new chapter in bilateral relations. (More details in the article “Three Decades After: Recollection from the visit of His Majesty the King of Thailand to Bangladesh”)

Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, already came to Bangladesh three times. She has collaborative projects with local authorities on children and youth development, and learning centres on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy to enhance knowledge and transfer agricultural technology. In 2018, the Princess inaugurated the Vetiver Grass Development and Propagation Centre in Chattogram which is supported by Chaipattana Foundation to serve as a learning centre for vetiver cultivation to prevent soil erosion.

At the same time, Bangladesh also contributed to development projects under royal patronage in Thailand. In 2010, the Bangladeshi government presented three Black Bengal goats to Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn who requested Chaipattana Foundation and Mae Fah Luang Foundation to carry out its breeding so that their kids could be distributed to local villagers as a new source of income. The project was successful and hundreds of goats were already given to numerous households especially in the north of Thailand.

In his address at the Dhaka Citizens' Reception at Ramna Park, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great stated that Dhaka is worthy of the reputation given by travellers who called the place "Queen City of the East." The King had no doubt that the mutual esteem and respect will result in further strengthening the bonds of friendship between the two countries.

Six decades after this address was delivered, the memory of many might have waned or faded. But the fruits of the royal visit in 1962 have never gone away. They have continuously exposed and resonated themselves in various forms throughout the journey of relations between Thailand and Bangladesh. In February 1972, just a decade after the royal visit, Thailand was among the first countries to recognize Bangladesh as an independent nation. Indeed, the visit at the highest level has truly served its purpose to inspire new cooperation for the benefits of the peoples.

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06

MULTICULTURALISM

Muslims in Thailand under Royal Benevolence

Suvat Chirapant

It was in 1964 that Their Majesties King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great and Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother first presided over the Maulid Nabi Celebration held by the Central Islamic Council of Thailand. At first, it might appear to be just another social event. But upon closer examination of the royal presence, one will realise that the monarchy and Muslims in Thailand have developed a lasting bond throughout history, one much deeper and meaningful than what may appear at first glance.

By tradition and constitutional requirement, the King of Thailand must be a Buddhist. This is not surprising for a country whose population is overwhelmingly Buddhist, with 93 percent having registered as so, while Islam and Christianity constitute for 5.45 and 1.15 percent of the Thai population respectively. However, tradition also calls for the monarch to be the royal patron of all faiths, and successive Thai Kings have carried on this important practice until today.

Long before the modern nation state, religions brought people from all walks of life and bound them together. It was indeed a unifying factor of ancient Thai Kingdoms. While Buddhism was embraced by

the majority, others enjoyed freedom of religion and were freely allowed to preach, trade, serve the throne or settle down in this land. The astute policy of rulers to accord equal treatment to all segments of the society has contributed to the stability and prosperity of the Kingdom from many centuries ago.



*Mural in Wat Sommanat Ratchaworawihan--built in 1853--in Pom Prap Sattru Phai District, Bangkok, depicting a Muslim courtier serving in the Royal Court.
Source: saranukromthai website*

Islam has been welcomed and supported by the royal court since its arrival in the 9th century through various groups of Muslims such as Arab sailors, Persian merchants and Javanese migrants. Many Muslims were appointed to senior posts in the royal court during the Ayutthaya Kingdom and Muslim communities were granted land for settlement. It was also noteworthy that the position of “Chula Rajamontri” was first established to oversee the affairs of Muslims in the Kingdom.

Several centuries later, Muslims in Thailand still enjoy patronage from Kings of the Chakri Dynasty, who are themselves descendants of multi-ethnic ancestors. Plots of land were royally bestowed for the construction of mosques and administration policies were carried out with awareness and respect for cultural and religious values. For instance, King Chulalongkorn permitted the use of Islamic law for family and inheritance legal cases among Muslims in the southern areas. A *kadi* will assume the function of a judge in such cases. This practice continues today and provincial Juvenile and Family Courts in the Southern Border Provinces still have *kadis* who sit in court with the judge.

Another impressive feat underlining the role of the Thai Monarch as patron of all faiths is the translation of the Holy Quran from Arabic into Thai. After King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great received an Arabic copy of the Holy Quran from a Muslim dignitary in 1962, His Majesty had the magnificent thought that a Thai translation of the Holy Quran could aid Thai Muslims to develop a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings. This noble task was assigned to Tuan Suwannasat, the then Chula Rajamontri or Sheikhu Islam of Thailand, who spent one year, seven months and eight days to finish the translation in 1964. The Thai Quran with the royal cypher of King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great on its green cover was published by the Religious Affairs Department in 1968 and distributed to mosques nationwide.



*Masjid Salahuddin in Klang Sub-district, Mueang District, Nakhon Si Thammarat Province, built in 1955, was not able to register officially as a Masjid because the land belonged to a deserted Wat Ta Chang (a Buddhist temple), until His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej used his private funds to buy the land from the Department of Religious Affairs.
Source: Tangnam News website*

Today interests of different ethnic, religion and political groups mesh together to form a modern, multicultural and complex society. States often juggle along the thin line to formulate public policy for the benefits of all. The monarchy, with deep and consistent contribution to development for the benefits and well-being of all Thais has proven to be a great balancer, adept stabiliser and promoter of social cohesion in diversity.

Although history, economics and geography have influenced the sentiments of Muslim communities in some parts of the Kingdom of being disenfranchised and excluded from the reach of mainstream development, stories that suggest otherwise have emerged in the past few decades and have echoed far and wide. Decades prior, Muslim communities in the Southern Border Provinces would refer to the King of Thailand as “Raja Siam” or King of Siam. After numerous Royal Projects were implemented which have uplifted the quality of life of those in the area by addressing problems of flooding, acidic soil, low agricultural productivity, and improvement of livelihoods, people from the area started calling the King “Raja Kita” or Our King. This reflects the sincere love and acceptance that have surfaced from their hearts.

The stability and strength of the Thai people emanate from the three pillars of the country: nation, religion and monarchy. They are represented in the tri-colour national flag adopted since the reign of King Vajiravudh. The bonds of respect and affection between the monarchy and the Thai people including Muslims in Thailand are an integral part of the reinforcing relations between its people and the national pillars. The bonds have indeed strengthened unity among diversity in the Kingdom.

To this day, His Majesty the King remains faithful to his royal duties as upholder of religions and continues to preside over the annual Maulid Nabi Celebration and to promote amongst Thai Muslims,

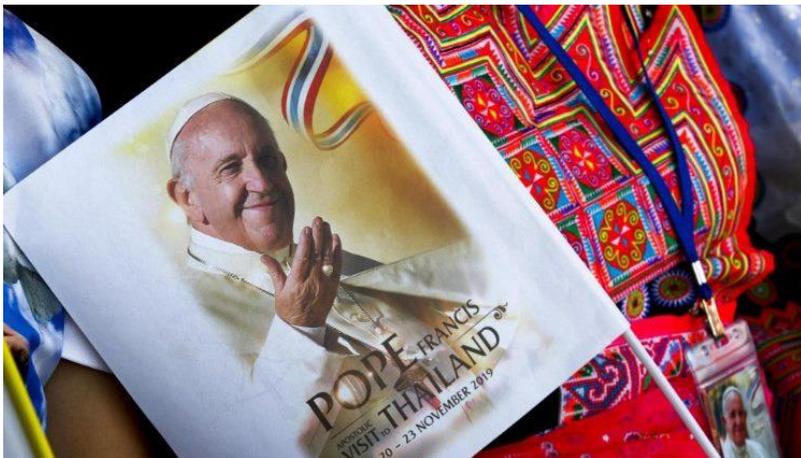
a deeper connection to their faith. For people to live together in harmony, one must be able to practice his or her faith without hindrance. If religions are empathetic and supportive of each other, then peace and stability of the nation will prevail.

* * * * *

Royal Imprint on Thailand's Christian Community

Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij

On 21 November 2019, tens of thousands of Catholics gathered at Supachalasai National Stadium to welcome Pope Francis during his historical visit to Thailand. Excitement and joy filled the air as the large crowd patiently waited to welcome their Pope and join in the papal mass. For the younger generation, it was the first time they had ever seen any pope in person since the nation's first ever apostolic visit took place thirty-five years ago.



Handheld poster flag prepared by Thai Catholics who gathered to welcome Pope Francis at his first public mass during His Holiness' official visit to Thailand in November 2019

Source: Vatican News website



*Pope Francis celebrating his first public mass at the National Stadium in Bangkok in November 2019
Source: Vatican News website*

Almost four decades later, the meeting between the present King and Queen and Pope Francis echoes not only the close bond of friendship cultivated over centuries between Thailand and the Vatican, but also speaks volumes about the monarch's pivotal role as a unifying force and an upholder of all religions in the promotion of interfaith harmony and peaceful coexistence in Thai society.



*Thai Catholics gather to welcome the arrival of Pope Francis in Bangkok, November 2019
Source: mgronline.com*

In order to better understand the present, it is vital to revisit the past. Historical evidence shows that Roman Catholicism was introduced to Thailand, formerly known as Siam, by Portuguese traders and missionaries in the mid-1500s and gained a firm foothold during the reign of King Narai of Ayutthaya. Being a professed Buddhist did not deter the benevolent ruler from giving equal attention and importance to the practice of all faiths on Thai soil.

As such, Catholic missionaries were allowed to practice and preach their faith in a predominantly Buddhist kingdom. In return, they shared knowledge of sciences, mathematics, art and languages that supported the nation's advancement. Moreover, those seeking refuge from religious persecution in

their homeland were granted permission to settle in the realm. Plots of land were royally bestowed to build places of worship, schools and healthcare facilities. Since then, close-knit Catholic communities have formed and flourished, with churches at the centre of their social, educational and religious lives. Nowadays there are about 380,000 Catholics in Thailand, out of a population of 66 million.

The monarchs of the Chakri Dynasty and members of the royal family have continuously supported Catholics throughout the years. They exerted efforts beyond the call of duty and accorded personal attention to the Thai-Catholic community, from presiding over religious ceremonies to visiting churches and providing financial donations to academic institutions and hospitals. Such patronage has been firmly based on the shared conviction of the monarchy and the Christian church to lift the well-being of the people.

Recognising that the Christian churches can help fill the gaps in social welfare development, successive Thai sovereigns have continuously assisted various Christian charitable activities that can improve the livelihood of all Thais. When King Mongkut, the current King's great, great grandfather, was a monk before acceding to the throne, he developed a personal friendship with the Apostolic Vicar of Eastern Siam, Jean-Baptiste Pallegoix. The royal monk taught Thai and Pali languages to the Monsignor while the latter taught English and Latin

in return. This acquired proficiency in English certainly enabled King Mongkut to have access to modern knowledge that was essential for national development at that time.

After his enthronement, King Mongkut forged ties with the Holy See by sending a royal letter to Pope Pius IX. His son, King Chulalongkorn, was the first monarch from a non-Christian kingdom to visit the Vatican in 1897 where he met with Pope Leo XIII.

The promotion of education in the provinces was among the priorities of King Vajiravudh, a shared goal with the Christian missionary work of the early 20th century. In 1906, while still the Crown Prince, he visited the Chiang Mai Boys' School, which was established by the American Presbyterian Mission. He graciously presided over the cornerstone laying ceremony of the new building and renamed the school "The Prince Royal's College." His only child, Princess Bejaratana, took the school under her patronage in 1986. Today the school remains a symbol of pioneering missionary work in northern Thailand.

During his seven-decade reign, beginning in 1946, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, a brilliant visionary, indelibly steered the course of the country's development and so developed the people's livelihoods. On several occasions, he granted funds for charitable activities and the construction of Christian hospital buildings, such as the Bangkok

Christian Hospital in Bangkok and the McCormick Hospital in Chiang Mai.

Following in the footsteps of his father, His Majesty the King, Rama X, solemnly pledged to carry on these royal initiatives and projects, thus helping to ameliorate their impact for the good of the people. So the noble undertakings and selflessness of Thai royalty have retained a special place in the hearts of many Christians, continuing to inspire charitable work, such as providing homes for homeless children and underprivileged students with opportunities in education and vocational training, enabling them to be self-reliant.

The special bonds between the monarchy and all religious communities in Thailand were exemplified by the royal audience of His Majesty the King during the coronation ceremony in 2019. On 6th May that year, representatives of the Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Protestant churches, together with the Sheikhu'l Islam of Thailand and the Sikh community were among those who had the privilege to present their sincere greetings in person to the new monarch before he delivered his first royal address to the people after his coronation.



*Pope Francis meets with Somdet Phra Ariyavongsagatayana, Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, at Wat Ratchabophit Sathitmahasimaram
Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand website*



*Pope Francis meets with priests and representatives of different religions at Chulalongkorn University Auditorium
Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand website*

Thailand would not be where it is today if the monarchy did not serve as a pillar of strength and a guiding light, leading by example and wielding incomparable moral authority. The generosity, thoughtfulness and embracing of diversity extended from the sovereign have shaped the nation and countless lives. Following their monarchs, Thais have adopted a mentality of openness and mindfulness of the differences among faiths and religions, and most importantly, a profound respect for those differences. The actions of the monarchy have indeed forged connections, furthered interreligious understanding and demonstrated that, regardless of what faith we hold, we are bound together by goodwill and shared values of kindness and respect.



Pope Francis arrives at the National Stadium for the Holy Mass on 21 November 2019, with the Archbishop of Bangkok, H.E. Francis Xavier Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij, seated behind him

Source: naewna.com

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Writers' Profiles



H.E. General Chalermchai Sitthisad was appointed Privy Councillor on 2 October 2018 and currently oversees various projects under royal patronage, including the Bajrasudha Gajanurak Project. Privy Councillor Sitthisad serves on the Executive Committee of the Ananda Mahidol Foundation and the Committee on Education Scholarships Under Royal Patronage. Prior to this, he served the military in a number of key positions in the Royal Thai Armed Forces including Commander of the Armed Forces Section on Specialised Warfare, Assistant to the Chief Commander of the Armed Forces, and Chief Commander of the Armed Forces.



H.E. Mr. Chutintorn Gongsakdi is a career diplomat and serves as Thailand's Ambassador to Singapore. At the time his article was published, Mr. Gongsakdi served as the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, overseeing the Ministry's multilateral and regional economic diplomacy. His portfolio includes the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, APEC, BIMSTEC, IORA and OECD. He has also served in key positions including Ambassador of Thailand to India, and Director-General at the Department of International Economic Affairs.



H.E. Mr. Dusit Manapan is a retired career diplomat. At the time his article was published, he served as the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, overseeing the Thailand International Cooperation Agency (TICA), Thailand's international aid agency. Mr. Manapan has a vast experience in both bilateral and multilateral issues, and previously served in key positions including Ambassador of Thailand to the State of Kuwait and Director-General of the Department of South Asia, Middle East and African Affairs.



Hon. Mr. Kitti Wasinondh, Senator, is a former career diplomat with a distinguished career in many roles at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He served as the Director-General of the Department of ASEAN Affairs and the Department of Information, as well as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Court of St. James's.



H.E. Francis Xavier Cardinal Kriengsak Kovithavanij received his Masters Degree, the Licentiate of Spirituality from the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. He was consecrated as Bishop of Nakhon Sawan on 2 June 2007 and installed as Archbishop of Bangkok on 16 August 2009. His positions at the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Thailand from 2009 to the present include President of the Episcopal Commissions for Pastoral Care of the Christians and President of the Catholic Commissions for Liturgy. In addition, Cardinal Kriengsak is a member of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses.



H.E. Mrs. Makawadee Sumitmor is the Ambassador of Thailand to the People's Republic of Bangladesh. She arrived in Dhaka in July 2021. Prior to that, she was Minister and Deputy Head of Mission at the Royal Thai Embassy in Paris and Deputy Director-General of the Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Her previous postings were in Paris as First Secretary and Kuala Lumpur as Minister Counsellor. Her articles were first published in January 2022 on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of His Majesty the King's visit to Bangladesh and in March 2022 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the visit of Their Majesties King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great and Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother to Dhaka and Chattogram. It also coincides with the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Bangladesh.



Dr. Phiset Sa-ardyen is the Executive Director of Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ), which is dedicated to promoting Thailand's justice system, in affiliation with UN-PNI. Dr. Sa-ardyen began his career as a lecturer at Chulalongkorn University and later joined the Ministry of Justice. Prior to his appointment as Executive Director of the TIJ in February 2021, he served in key positions at the Ministry of Justice including Director of International Affairs, Director of Legal Affairs, and Director of Information and Communication Technology Centre.



H.E. Mr. Sarun Charoensuwan is a distinguished career diplomat with a wealth of experience in both bilateral and multilateral relations. He has served as the Director-General of three regional departments at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including the Department of European Affairs, East Asian Affairs, and American and South Pacific Affairs. He was Thailand's Ambassador to France during 2018 to early 2022 before returning to headquarters as the Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs responsible for Thailand's bilateral relations.



H.E. Mr. Singtong Lapisatepun is a career diplomat, and currently serves as Ambassador of Thailand to Japan. Mr. Lapisatepun is an expert on Japan and East Asian Affairs, speaks fluent Japanese and had previously served in key positions including Ambassador of Thailand to the Republic of Korea and Director-General of Department of East Asian Affairs.



Dr. Sumet Tantivejkul is the Secretary-General of the Chaipattana Foundation, which was established by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great with the vision to provide prompt, timely and necessary responses to problems affecting the Thai people through various development projects. He is often seen in photographs of King Bhumibol as he served the King closely for 18 years at the Office of the Royal Development Projects from 1981 until 1999, when he resigned and continued to serve His Majesty as Secretary-General of the Chaipattana Foundation—where chaipattana means “Victory of Development.” Dr. Sumet is also an adviser to the government’s water management committee and has advised the committee to follow His Majesty’s guidance in understanding both the geographical and social landscape of the country to best respond to the development needs of each locality.



H.E. Mr. Suvat Chirapant is currently the Deputy Secretary General and Advisor on Foreign Affairs of the Office of Chaipattana Foundation, and the Advisor on Foreign Affairs to the Sheikhul Islam of Thailand. Prior to working with the Chaipattana Foundation, Mr. Chirapant had been a career diplomat until 2017. He served the Thai Foreign Ministry in key positions, including Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ambassador of Thailand to Qatar, Mexico, Permanent Representative and Ambassador to ASEAN, and Ambassador of Thailand to Turkey.



H.E. Mr. Tana Weskosith was, at the time his article was published, the Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. He has a long and distinguished career in the Thai foreign service. Prior to being appointed Deputy Permanent Secretary, he served as Thailand's Ambassador to Italy and Director-General of the Department of Treaties and Legal Affairs. Mr. Weskosith now serves as Thailand's Ambassador to the French Republic.



H.E. Dr. Tej Bunnag is the Secretary-General of the Thai Red Cross Society and former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand. A former career diplomat, he served as Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, and Ambassador of Thailand at Beijing, Geneva, Paris, and Washington, D.C. He was a Government Scholar and studied history at Cambridge and Oxford University in the UK.



H.E. Mr. Vijavat Isarabhakdi has served as the Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand since his appointment on 13 August 2019. Prior to that, he served as Advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs during 2018 – 2019. As a former career diplomat, he served as the Ambassador of Thailand to Canada and the United States of America, as well as Ambassador of the Permanent Mission of Thailand to the United Nations Office in Geneva. In addition, he held various senior positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, including Deputy Permanent Secretary for Foreign Affairs, overseeing Thailand’s bilateral relations with other countries, and Director-General of the Department of International Organizations.



Dr. Wiwat Salyakamthorn became well known from decades of training farmers on the application of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy to the agricultural sector to promote sustainable productivity and livelihoods. He has experience working at the Office of the Royal Development Projects Board and in experimenting with the development concept on his own family's farm in Chon Buri, with great success. He is also a former Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the Founder of the Agri-Nature Foundation which runs community workshops at his farm. In addition, he holds other prominent positions, including President of the Institute of Sufficiency Economy.



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First publication by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
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