

National Broadcast by General Prayut Chan-o-cha, Prime Minister –October 23, 2015



Good evening, dear Thai citizens.

October 23rd marks "King Chulalongkorn Day" or "Wan Piyamaharaj Day", the memorial day for HM King Rama V who during his great reign devoted himself to the country and his people. His remarkable contributions include the abolition of slavery, bureaucratic reform, and basic infrastructure development such as irrigation, electricity, and transportation. HM King Rama V also attached great significance to having community members appoint their own local leaders, with eligible candidates not having had a criminal record with charges related to narcotics, gambling, and forest encroachment as a prerequisite. His Majesty saw the importance of the electoral system from local to national levels, and now village headsmen are leaders of local people and as they are the ones closest to the people. Though elections may not be able to provide all the solutions to matters of governance, they do allow for ethical and upright citizens to be elected to office, to contribute to addressing our common problems.

On this occasion, I would like to take this opportunity to ask my fellow citizens to send their wishes and express our gratefulness to our Monarchy by upholding solidarity and national reconciliation and working together to bring sustainability as well as reform to our country, in the direction bestowed upon us by His Majesty the King.

On the auspicious occasion of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 88th Birthday Anniversary on December 5th this year, the government and Thai people will join together to live up to HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn's wishes to organize a national cycling event to show our unity, loyalty and devotion for His Majesty the King. The "Bike For DAD" activity will be held on Friday, 11 December 2015, at 3 pm. It will be 29 kilometers from the starting point to the finish line. At the moment, a lot of preparation is being made. Those interested in joining the activity will need to register. Further information can be obtained on Bikefordad2015.com, from Nov 2 to Nov 15, 2015. You can also call hotline 1122 for additional information. Please have your bike and physical condition ready for the event and take precautions. Those who have medical conditions need to have their health checked regularly. Watch out for unexpected accidents during practice. The government is very concerned for your safety. HRH the Crown Prince has pronounced that He wishes for everyone to be safe and happy during this special event.

These are the important issues I want to inform you about today.

As for economic measures, the government and the NCPO have implemented many programmes, be they in agriculture, the industrial sector, trade and investment both inside and outside the country, as well as

infrastructure development. Recently, we have been placing emphasis on the real estate sector, connecting entrepreneurs to construction material providers. This can help improve living standards of people and help those who are in debt, in particular household debts. How can we make them performing loans that can actually be paid back? Related agencies will need to find effective solutions to this issue. We will try to address this problem without causing further distress or complications. Responsible units will need to come up with an answer; otherwise, construction business operators will be affected.

We are not doing this to favour anyone or any sector. Entrepreneurs have been acting in accordance with regulations. So we need to look at the big picture. We have to take initiatives and not let corruption hamper these programmes. If nothing is done due to apprehensiveness about being implicated, the government will be accused of not trying to solve the problem. The government will not undertake anything without thoroughly thinking it over.

The most important thing is that people should know their own capacities and not create any more unnecessary debts, but rather spend only to build a future. Previously, the systems flaws were not addressed, there was no orderliness, and the people were not given a real chance to learn about the principle of a sufficiency economy. Thus lot of Thai people overspent on their credit cards to buy unnecessary or expensive things that they cannot afford. This creates informal debts with loan sharks, which are difficult to control.

We need to emphasize the value of household budget spreadsheets where people can keep record of their spending, especially low income earners. The current administration is keen to help low income earners. Debt problems need to be addressed. Debts, if any, should be in the form valuable assets like houses or lands. We must be prudent in spending, as His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy philosophy teaches. Everyone has to help out during this pivotal period. Spend wisely and the economy will have more liquidity.

The overall economic outlook is stable as some numbers have seen significant progress while some have been sluggish. With the global economy the way it is and because Thailand's economy is not as strong, I need everyone's cooperation to get our economy back on track, increase the country's competitiveness, create jobs, and promote investments in the country. Everything is expected to get better next year. It is still difficult for people to feel the results of what the government has done, because income levels have not significantly increased. In order to strengthen our economy, a bit of time is required. We need to create connectivity and build a strong economic chain for a bright future. With this, small, medium and large businesses will improve. Our economy will then be strong. And as a result, the country will be able to earn more income. Then the government will be able to better take care of the people. The government has to set aside a large amount of budget for social welfare so we need to readjust our economic structure. It must be in the form of "state of the people". The government's economic team has already informed you this matter.

In order to help rice and rubber farmers and other agriculturists, we will need to improve the whole agricultural system from upstream to downstream. The process is now underway through better understanding. We all have agreed that we will work together to improve the system, reduce costs, abide by laws and agreements, grow alternative plants, raise livestock, and work on measures to assist rubber tappers. We also agreed that there will be no more demands that end up causing chaos. This was promised by association chiefs and leaders in the rubber industry. Farmers promised to work with the newly-formed rubber committee which was

established under the country's Rubber Act. This act had been requested by the farmers and now it is promulgated. I would like to thank all the farmers, association heads, and all related personnel as well as the producers and entrepreneurs. Please think of ways for more rubber to be used domestically, making the price higher. We can no longer rely solely on exports. Rubber can also be used in construction of futsal stadium. It can also be used in rubber flooring. Many new companies have emerged and these companies are buying rubber off the farmers. Related agencies need to think of how rubber can be used in other businesses. Please use rubber in road construction as well. Due to the increasing prices of rubber or asphalt, you need to know where and when asphalt can be applied. Farmers need to have confidence that rubber can be the key product that can create jobs and income for them as well as for the country.

I would like to urge the agricultural sector about using water for the new farming season to keep close contact with information provided and heed suggestions from state officials. The government wants the farmers to choose alternative crops when necessary, especially farming along the Chao Phraya River, Mae Klong River, and other waterways throughout Thailand. The government will support you while projects have already been approved. We want the farmers to help store as much water as you can. You could also make your own pond or water retention areas. Some farmers have begun to store a large amount of water amid fears of next year's drought. I want all areas to do the same. Please don't wait for the government to do it for you, you can make your own water storage areas. You can keep water in your rice fields. In flooded areas, you need to keep in mind before releasing flood water that what if the rain doesn't come, where will the water come from. Responsible agencies need to better manage the water and teach farmers how to store water.

I would like to see more participation from the public, private sector, and state offices under the idea of "state of the people", allowing us to have more active conversation with one another. Whatever we can work on together, we should do it now. If there is a problem, we can solve them together. If nothing is done today, the problem will never go away. If you want to make suggestions, please come through the appropriate channels. It is not wrong for leaders to protect the interest of their groups, but as a Thai national, we all need to think of the overall impact. This is a true democracy, when everyone is equally benefiting. Everyone needs to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens, as stipulated by the law and the constitutions. We also need to respect the rights of others, responsibility, rights, and liberty should come together.

Officials, considered representatives of the government, must improve their approaches to work. I have been closely monitoring and assessing the work of the heads of each section. Please have your jobs finished without delays and please stick to the policy given. Everyone has to make a contribution, be committed, and make sacrifices. In order to have proactive approaches, we need to plan things in advance. We need to draw up a plan for what we can expect in the future. Local officials have to regularly visit their areas. Don't have to wait until the residents are in trouble. You can also find out what is happening to your people on social media. If they need help, give them a hand. You can also propose solutions to the government through channels like Damrongtham centers where representatives from many agencies are stationed. Sometimes it needs a collaborative effort from many ministries to solve a problem. Complaints can be filed at the center and will be forwarded to responsible agencies. I have also instructed national security related agencies to try to connect police stations with Damrongtham centers so as to allow police officers to better serve the people. This is also included in the

police reform plan by the government and the NCPO. There are several matters that need to be addressed before July, 2017.

The next topic concerns the procurement of NGV buses. At present, according to the information we have, most of the buses running on streets today are old and unsafe. The procurement will be divided into two phases. The first phase is to immediately replace old buses with new ones. It will be done in a transparent manner. We might need to buy finished vehicles because it is urgent. We will do everything in our capacity to prevent corruption. As for the second phase, it is possible that we will have buses that run on electricity. We may have domestic producers make these vehicles. This can also help to create jobs, income, and new entrepreneurs. Prices should be lower too. This is what we call gradually building stability. We cannot do everything all at once. In addition, we also need to think about public utilities and how people commute. We need sustainability in this sector. Bus routes will be readjusted. We need to have our transportation development plan ready for the capital and other provinces.

We also need to restructure the transportation system including railways and roads. Developments will be seen in Bangkok and its vicinity according to the master plan which is now being studied and will be implemented soon. We should have electric buses in order for the country to save energy. Electric transport vehicles are used in many countries around the world, especially in Europe. Electric buses with overhead wires run on electric power. It doesn't have to be buses that run on the rail, but buses with wheels. These buses could work on streets that are not too congested or in the outer areas. I am especially concerned for the low-income earners so I want them to have more options, because they don't have access to electric trains and high-speed trains until they earn enough income, so the government will look after all people.

Also, if we need to make those trains or buses ourselves, we may need to do some studies and researches in advance. We may one day have to produce batteries and engines. These products are expensive, so it would be cheaper if we could produce them. The question is "are we capable of producing them yet?" The production takes high technology into account, which we have to learn more about. Everything is now under the study. It is something we are serious about getting into. We also need to help our country reduce carbon emissions released by vehicles. This has been a major problem for the world. We need to reduce the emission rate by 30%. In order to drive the economy over the upcoming period, we will need to create linkages with ASEAN and expand to other international partners. This could take the form of Thailand plus one, plus two or plus three. Industries that are strong and have good potential, such as the food industry, will be promoted. Infrastructure, housing, border trade and special economic zones are matters at hand. Development of industry clusters and super clusters will take place in tandem with the creation of new traders. These small traders will receive market penetration and networking support from the established traders.

As for tourism, efforts to create linkages are ongoing with all ASEAN countries. Let us help one another determine how to create connectivity. We are strategic partners, not competitors. How do we facilitate visitors who come to Thailand and wish to go to Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia or Malaysia? Connectivity in the tourism sector will provide more jobs and income, and strengthen ASEAN. Linkages should be created for cultural diversity, as well as for transportation infrastructure development, facilities, and safety provision for tourists.

The Ministry of Commerce has informed the Cabinet of the view it has on the Trans-Pacific Strategic Economic Partnership Agreement and the effects, both positive and not, that may fall on Thailand. The TPP is an agreement on liberalization of markets, trade, services and investment. Its scope also covers reforms on economic regulations. Becoming a member of the TPP will entail positive effects as well as other consequences. The Ministry of Commerce had invited the Federation of Thai Industries, the Board of Trade and the Thai Bankers Association for a discussion on this subject. All 3 organizations deemed that becoming a member of TPP will be beneficial and will have an influencing effect on investors. However, some business representatives remain worried about how Thailand will compete over the exportation of certain goods known as sensitive products. Thailand has free trade agreements with 9 of the 12 TPP member countries. It currently does not have such agreements with the United States, Canada and Mexico. At present, Thailand is negotiating a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. The RCEP is an economic cooperation framework between the 10 member countries of ASEAN and 6 of their trading partners – China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

This is a big market that can accommodate goods and services from Thailand. The population within the ASEAN + 6 region is 3.5 billion, almost half of the world population. To become a member of TPP, negotiations have to be conducted with bilateral trading partners, and consensus reached. This is expected to take 1-2 years. We still have time to consider this. I have asked relevant agencies to familiarize themselves with the information presented by the Ministry of Commerce, and to consider it in all dimensions. Thailand still has time to carefully study additional details, before reaching any decision. We are not shutting ourselves out, and we have until year 2017. Progress needs to be made in all dimensions, thus our attention is required elsewhere as well. Scrutiny of independent organizations' spending has been ongoing and based on factual reports submitted by the respective organizations. I have not been trying to focus on anyone in particular. I wanted to see optimal use of taxpayers' money, in manners that allow the best gains to be had for the nation and the public. I do not wish for people to be overly concerned. Agencies or funds that correctly spent money to bring about gains for the nation, in accordance with their respective mission, need not worry about the agency being closed down or dissolved.

Agencies that have not been spending funds in accordance with their mission or as stipulated by law must make improvements. Every ministry is working on this. It must be understood that taxpayers' money cannot be spent at will. Evaluations have to be made, results have to be reported, while transparency and accountability are also required. Efficiency and transparency are necessary because the state budget is being utilized. Every baht and every satang should go toward activities that are beneficial to society.

As for corporate social responsibility (CSR) – this is when businesses set aside part of their profit to give back to society. This may be localized where a business operates. Most businesses have focused on the environment. In essence, 'giving back to society' means more than that. It also includes jobs promotion, income generation, uplifting the quality of life, and promoting education. I would like connectivity to be created among these activities and social businesses and social enterprises. This will allow the grassroots economy to be propelled, and communities to be empowered. Efforts relating to the environment and the generation of higher income for people are in harmony with the government's notion of a 'state of the people'. 'Giving back' can be more useful and can become another contributor to sustainable development if

we can empower communities and create connectivity in all dimensions. I would like all state agencies and state enterprises that have the opportunity to engage with businesses to request the latter to conduct CSR projects in this manner. It would also lend towards public-private cooperation.

Another matter which needs to be understood, is that the government and the NCPO still needs to utilize sovereign authority to maintain stability within the nation, and to facilitate reforms in instances where there is no accommodating law or when such laws are not yet ready. Therefore the government and NCPO have to be rigorous with any affair which is important to the future of the country – especially ones related to political stability, orderliness, and the safety of the public.

I would like everybody's cooperation to consider the nation first and foremost. I have had to make decisions to utilize Section 44 on unresolved issues that needed to be addressed. I would not have stepped in if the nation was without problems and the laws were respected, and if changes and reforms were not warranted. I would like everybody to remind themselves to not break the law or violate NCPO orders. Most of the time, violators make claims about democracy and human rights without looking at how the law was being enforced for the public. The violators were also infringing on human rights when they violate others. There is ongoing opposition based on claims that I violate human rights and exercise autocratic power because wide-ranging damage has been incurred. But previously, many problems had been left piling on one another for a lengthy period and those in power did not address them.

So, I would like to once again inform you that the sovereign authority I have exercised is still intact. Any demands should be made in accordance with the law, and one cannot claim unawareness about NCPO mandates or that we have done something to bully the people. The mandates are announced in advance, and are issued for the sake of other members of the public. We are not looking to exercise this power for our own gains. Once we have a constitution and a complete democracy, and an elected government, then things will be done in democratic system. I do not wish for the past circumstances and problems to recur. Everybody should be acquainted with the problems of the country now. I have mentioned them again and again. You must consider the problems and think about how we can collaborate. If I do not directly address problems then the problems will remain unresolved. Those who understand should explain it to those who do not, and help restrain those who might try to sidestep or violate the mandates. These people will then make claims to the international community, human rights and democracy. Such action hinders the progression of all matters. Lastly, I would like to commend Mr. Chat Ubonchinda for assisting a Norwegian couple who were stuck in mud. These events reflect on the Thai identity. We are people that have compassion for fellow human beings, especially our guests. The event involving the foreign tourists has been positive for Thailand, adding to the 'land of smiles' identity. Honest, sincere service will create an impression with tourists and encourage them to revisit our country. Exploitation means a tourist will only visit us once and never return. We would like tourists to revisit our country. We must act as good hosts and build an atmosphere of safety during tourists' entire stay in Thailand. I am most impressed with Mr. Chat's words about "do virtuous deeds without expecting to be seen or expecting gains. May the younger generation help preserve Thai culture and take actions for the common good, without considering whether compensation or gains will be had for the action". I would like to thank Mr. Thirasak Saksithawi for letting others know about this story.

Recently, I was informed about a student who helped an ambulance wade through traffic. The ambulance was carrying a man who had been bitten by a cobra. The student was worried that the man might die, so he knocked on the window of each car stuck in the traffic snarl to ask them to make space for the ambulance. The patient arrived at the hospital and was saved. This is a virtuous act. I would like these individuals to be commended so they may have the spirit to continue carrying out such good deeds.

Lastly, we must take pride in Thai integrity and our history. Muay Thai, Thai music, Thai products, Thai culture and Thai traditions have existed for hundreds of years. Please do not pay heed to those who seek to damage, distort truths or create misunderstandings, especially when reference is made to democracy as something that over simplistically implies unlimited freedoms regardless of responsibility or accountability or respect for the rights of others. Such actions can destabilize the country and damage the country's image, including the solidarity of its people. In the future, make sure a good government administers the country, so that the problems we are having now do not recur. Right now, I am here to make corrections so please do not denounce everything I do. Why not look to the future, and stop acting like you have in the past.

Hence, I consider Thai clothing and music to be important and that these identities must be maintained and not forgotten, as they provide us with our ancestry. If we do not know how Thailand came about and what our ancestors and our Monarchy have done for us, we will not know how to love our own country or to be proud of our heritage, and people will be disunited. The sacrifices that have been made for our nation over many centuries, the will to come together as the Thai people - and now you are now seeking to destroy the one thing we cherish for your own personal gain.

Another thing we need to be aware about the influences from global culture. So use your discretion while preserving our own culture. In a larger sense we must preserve the pillars of our nation, our religions and our monarchy. History will teach us how to live in the present and what actions to take for the future. We are making history today so our children can be proud in the future and respect and admire what we have done today.

So with this understanding I ask you to give me the time to do my job. It will be problematic if we do not have stability and public safety, while our political situation is unreliable. How can it be reliable, when the constitution, national reform and national reconciliation remain uncompleted? We must all help out. I have already set out that elections take place in July 2017. So you must work with me to get us there. Do not leave me working alone on everything – economy, society, laws, justice, foreign affairs, economic restructuring, agriculture, low-income earners, indebted persons, corruption. There are a hundred things being worked on, and we will stay where we are if you do not help me.

We must help preserve Thailand's unique heritage. If we allow it to be forgotten, then nobody will come to visit Thailand. I leave you with this.

Thank you. I wish you happiness during the weekend. Be safe. Goodbye.
