

Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej and National Day of Thailand

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His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej A Modern Monarch

BORN in 1927 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the United States of America, where his father, Prince Mahidol, was studying medicine, the young King had lived mostly in Switzerland with his mother, sister and elder brother. The family had moved there after Prince Mahidol's death and, except for the 1938 visit, had been cut off from their homeland by the Second World War. He had a relatively normal youth, displaying notable talents in both music and engineering, and becoming fluent in three European languages as well as being at ease in different cultures. When he suddenly found himself the ninth Chakri ruler, he returned to complete his education, changing from science to political science and law in recognition of his new role. In his Oath of Accession to the Throne, King Bhumibol Adulyadej pledged to "reign with righteousness for the benefit and happiness of the Siamese people". But what sort of reign would it be? After fifteen years of tumultuous change, during most of which the monarch had been merely a name to most Thais, was there still a place for monarchy? If so, what form would it take?

Any doubts about acceptance of the monarchy were quickly dispelled. Vast crowds in Bangkok had already shown their enthusiasm during the ceremonies, that, accompanied the royal wedding and the coronation, which members of the younger generation were witnessing for the first time. In 1955, the King and Queen made a pioneering trip to the impoverished northeast, then a remote region that had never seen a ruling monarch in person but that also, with some reason, felt itself to be neglected by the central government. For 22 arduous days, the royal couple toured the region, visiting villages as well as cities, talking to ordinary people as well as monks and local officials. The response was overwhelming. Hundreds of thousands of people, some of whom walked for days from isolated hamlets, turned out for even a fleeting glimpse of their King. The warmth of their greeting was unmistakable; so, too, was the extent of their needs as revealed in the conversations His Majesty had with those he met.

This decision to bring the monarchy into direct contact with the provincial population was perhaps the most important of all those taken by His Majesty. Today he and mem-

bers of the Royal Family spend several months of the year in one or another of the royal residences that have been built outside of Bangkok - at Chiang Mai in the far north, Sakon Nakhon in the northeast, Hua Hin on the Gulf of Thailand, and Narathiwat in the south. From these, defying discomforts and inconveniences, His Majesty has visited every province in the country, going to even the most remote villages by helicopter, jeep, train, boat, or, on occasion, on foot, to ascertain for himself local conditions. In the process, he has become the most travelled monarch in Thai history, as well as the best informed about a wide range of rural problems and difficulties.

Often assisted by other members of the Royal Family - Her Majesty the Queen, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, and their Royal Highness Princesses Maha Chakri Sirindhorn and Princess Chulabhorn - the King takes copious notes on these trips and later initiates steps to provide assistance, working through the appropriate government agencies or sometimes using his own funds in the early stages. He has established the Chai Pattana Foundation to provide initial or emergency financial support for subsequent development projects. A directive is never simply issued; the impetus comes from the local population, who must agree with the proposal and be able to cooperate on its implementation. Over 2,000 "royally-suggested" projects have been started in this way. Some are basic, like irrigation and water-conservation schemes in the arid northeast or drainage and land-reclamation in the south, which faces the problem of floods. In others, imaginative solutions have been applied. His Majesty was the guiding force behind an artificial rain-making project which started in the late 1950s and took over ten years for experiment and development so that the first field operation began in 1969 at Khao Yai National Park in Nakhon Ratchasima province. Thereafter the successful methods were repeated countless of times throughout the years all over the Kingdom, whenever conditions were suitable. Neighbouring countries have also called on Thai teams to give assistance in times of drought.

Another early endeavour was His Majesty's Hilltribe Development Project in the north, now known as the Royal Project and encompassing lowland

areas as well. Migratory tribal peoples living in the mountainous region that forms Thailand's borders with Laos and Myanmar had become an increasing problem to the government, partly due to their destructive slash-and-burn technique of clearing land, as well as to the traditional cultivation of opium poppy. Under His Majesty's project, as wide variety of new crops have been introduced to replace opium grown by these hilltribes, and educational and medical facilities have been located at their permanent settlements. International recognition of the Royal Project's effectiveness has come in many forms, including financial grants and expert assistance by several foreign governments. In 1988, it was selected for the Ramon Mag-saysay Award in the area of international understanding. In short, it may be said that, through the Hilltribe Development Project, His Majesty has given the tribal people a "sense of belonging" to Thai society, and, in effect, prevented them from falling prey to communist influence, which would have cost the government vast sums of money for security expenses and might have entailed the loss of many more lives. As it was, scarce resources could be channelled for the development of the country's economic infrastructure.

Besides bringing obvious benefits to the country, such activities have yielded other



His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej

results, less tangible but no less important. They have made the monarchy a potent moral force in Thai society and reinforced His Majesty's paternal image that inspires both respect and deep affection.

sadors present their credentials to His Majesty, and he grants audiences to foreign heads of state, diplomats and officials of international organizations. As head of State, he convenes the National Assembly at the be-



The Great King of Thailand

This year, 2000, is an auspicious occasion for Thai people as it marks the 73rd Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the longest-reigning monarch in the world.

DURING the past half-century the world has witnessed tremendous changes in science, technology, economics, society and environment. Thailand itself has gone through unprecedented changes to its way of life, both good and bad. Throughout this turbulent period, the Thai people have had one person in whom they were able to place their trust, love and respect: His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the great sovereign of the Thai nation.

Not only has he weathered the changes alongside his subjects during the past fifty-four years, but His Majesty the King has also brought prosperity to the country and happiness to the people, no matter where they live or how they earn their living.

Thailand is indeed fortunate that its reigning monarch is fully committed to developing his country, with the aim of improving the people's livelihood and well-being. His Majesty is not required by tradition nor by law to take such a heavy burden upon himself. He considers it his duty to the nation.

In April 1959, Their Majesties the King and Queen began making private visits to the people in areas around the Summer Palace in Prachuab Khiri Khan Province, southwest of Bangkok, while in residence during the hot season. Shocked by the hard condition they saw, Their Majesties decided to help. True to their characters as real development workers and leaders, innumerable royal projects were initiated to provide solutions to long-running problems in all parts of the country. The process has been accelerated with the establishment of royal residences in the north, north-east and the south, which became the private headquarters for development projects closely supervised by Their Majesties themselves. Each year The King and Queen spend up to eight months in the provinces to follow up their projects.

From his continuous visits to all areas of the country in the years that followed, His Majesty realized that the deterioration of natural resources has become a national problem. He recognized the urgent need to solve the grave problems faced by farmers of soil degradation and the shortage of agricultural land, which he proposed to do through two main methods - water and soil conservation, and land redistribution and reform, endeavoring to create models for farmers to follow, so that they can implement each project by themselves.

Most of over 2,000 royally-initiated projects, 31.9 per cent involve water resources development. This reflects His Majesty's recognition of the importance of water to the Thai people as highlighted in his royal speech delivered in 1986:

"Most importantly, we must have water to drink, use and cultivate, because life is here. If there is water, we can survive. If there is no electricity, we can survive. But if there is electricity and no water, we cannot survive..."

The King's great ingenuity and perception has created such worthy programs as the Royal Rain-making Project, seeding rain clouds to ease drought and increase water in the river basins for electricity generation and agriculture, the "New Theory" on land management and development of small water sources as integrated and full-cycle agriculture projects; and the Chai Pattana Aerator for waste water treatment, patented under His Majesty the King's name in Thailand and internationally, the first such invention by a monarch.

In his endeavours, the King made clear to all concerned that his ultimate aim in agricultural development is farmers' self-sufficiency in food items, such as rice, vegetables, fruits, and livestock, diversification of income sources, so that farmers are not reliant on cash crops alone. On the other hand, natural resources and environmental conservation has to be conducted at the same time. The principles of self-reliance, invention and economical living

are personal traits that His Majesty the king has inherited from his beloved mother, Her Royal Highness the late Princess Mother.

His Majesty encourages the reduction of expenditure or production costs in agriculture, through the harnessing and full utilization of natural resources. He promotes the use of cows and buffaloes in place of machinery, the use of crop rotation systems for soil improvement, the use of organic fertilizers and natural substances in improving productivity as well as pest and insect eradication, the production of biogas, and the use of natural products to earn extra income for the people. Such an inventory is collectively known as sustainable agriculture.

His Majesty's ideas in agricultural development have been implemented in earnest and on a wide-scale, from royally-initiated projects, royal projects and projects under the royal patronage to project under the jurisdiction of various ministries and government agencies, and in recent times, royally-initiated projects in the neighbouring Lao People's Democratic Republic.

Over the past fifty-four years, His Majesty the King has dedicated himself to relieving the hardship and poverty of the nation's farmers. Each and every day has been a working day for His Majesty, no matter where he stays, at Chitralada Villa in Bangkok or at the various provincial palaces. For him, the main task has always been the happiness and well-being of the people.

The date, December 5th, is therefore considered the most auspicious day on the calendar of events in Thailand, being the birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of the Chakri Dynasty, the revered and beloved monarch of the Thai nation. All Thais are joined together as one. Together, we can show our gratitude for all that His Majesty has done for the country and the people. Together, let us do good for our Great King.

Long Live His Majesty King Bhumibol
On the Occasion of His Majesty King Bhumibol's
73rd Birthday Anniversary & National Day of
Thailand on 5th December, 2000



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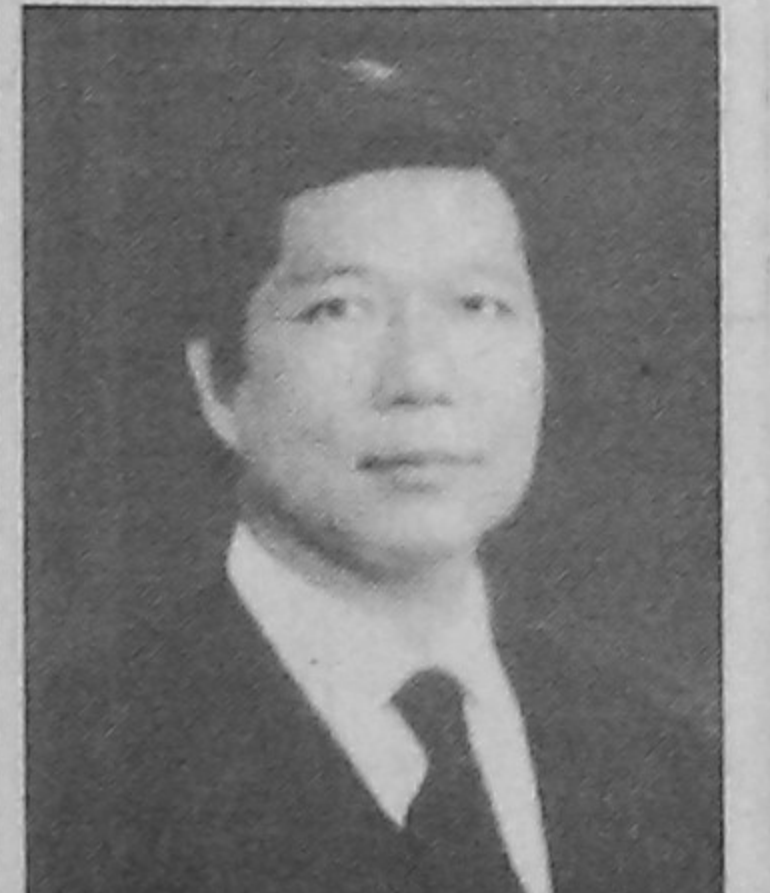
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MESSAGE



His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's 73rd Birthday Anniversary which falls on December 5th is a source of joy and happiness for all Thais living in the Kingdom as well as abroad, many of whom owe their improved livelihood and well-being to the Monarch's generosity and ingenuity as manifested in many Royal initiated development projects such as rain-making project, agricultural self-sufficiency, environmental conservation, flood prevention measures, and proper land utilization, to name a few.

This auspicious occasion marking His Majesty's Birthday Anniversary also affords me the opportunity to highlight some salient features of the Thai-Bangladesh relations, which, in just a short span of time, has taken a quantum leap in all fronts. It is a source of gratification to witness further expansion and deepening of bilateral cooperation in many areas based on the commonality of our interest and complementary nature of our two economies. In 1999, the

trade value between our two countries registered an increase of 40.6% over the previous year. During the first half of 2000, the value of trade registered an increase of about 90% compared to the same period last year. The phenomenal surge in bilateral trade volume coupled with the strong business presence of Thai entrepreneurs in Bangladesh in the areas of agro-industry, energy, construction, designing and manufacturing bear a testimony to active interactions between our two business communities which are instrumental in bringing our economic and commercial relations to new heights.

Furthermore, the visits by high-ranking Bangladesh officials to Thailand this year have resulted in broadening and deepening of our bilateral ties which will yield mutual benefits. The participation of HE Dr Supachai Panichpakdi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce of Thailand, in the International Chamber of Commerce, Asia Conference in Dhaka in November last has given further impetus in stretching the threshold of our trade and economic relations. These visits have been supplemented by numerous efforts of the Royal Thai Embassy in intensifying cooperation in economic, trade and cultural fields. Some of the notable activities undertaken by the Royal Thai Embassy were "Thai Food Festival", Thai participation in Dhaka International Trade Fair 2000, and "Thai Fabric and Fashion Show 2000".

As we enter the new millennium, global economies exposes a wide range of opportunities as well as threats. The world development requires our two

countries to share a common vision and common strategy to handle a range of key political, economic and social issues. It is therefore imperative that Thai-Bangladesh cooperation within the context of WTO and sub-regional level should be strengthened to achieve desired result.

It is gratifying to note that, on the sub-regional level, Bangladesh and Thailand have been actively involved in promoting economic and trade relations under the framework of BIMST-EC. It is also significant to note that business leaders, academicians and representatives of the mass media of BIMST-EC members countries recognize the potential of this sub-regional grouping and are being engaged in their respective fields to translate BIMST-EC program and sectoral economic cooperation into concrete benefits.

I firmly believe that, from this new plateau of Thai-Bangladesh relationships, immense opportunities abound and many more courses towards greater mutual benefit can be charted. Towards this end, our two countries can draw upon a large reservoir of goodwill and strong bonds of cordial friendship existing between our two peoples. Such cordial friendship and close cooperation will undoubtedly propel the Thai-Bangladesh relationship into this new millennium where brighter prospects, greater opportunities, and mutually beneficial partnership are to be reaped.

Pithaya Pookaman
Ambassador of Thailand to Bangladesh

During a student-led uprising in 1973, both sides turned to the King for advice that eased tensions and prevented more bloodshed. He provided equally wise counsel during Thailand's struggle against the communist insurgency, suggesting solutions aimed at relieving rural poverty and inspiring confidence in the government's constructive efforts. In May of 1992, violence once again broke out between pro-democracy civilians and military troops; television audiences around the world viewed the scene when leaders of both factions were granted an audience by the King, whose advice ended the confrontation. It can be said that, following the end of the conflict in Indochina, Thailand did not become the next "domino" to fall to communism, as had been expected by some quarters in the Western world. This was due, to a great extent, to His Majesty's leadership and wisdom. More recently, he has advised on ways to solve Bangkok's seemingly endemic problems of traffic congestion and flooding, often going out personally to inspect the affected areas.

In addition His Majesty presides over a large number of other functions, many of them deeply rooted in Thai tradition. Three times a year, at the beginning of each season, he ritually changes the robes of the sacred Emerald Buddha. Moreover, as a devout Buddhist, he participates in numerous merit-making ceremonies at temples all over the country. He is regarded, however, as the Upholder of All Religions, and as such has actively promoted better understanding between the Thai Buddhists and the other religious groups, such as the Muslims in the southern most provinces. All new ambas-

gling of each new session, and every draft law is submitted to him for his signature before promulgation.

Early in his reign he began attending graduation ceremonies, personally handing out degrees to the graduates of Thai universities as well as to those of military academies. The recent growth in the number of such institutions has made it necessary to delegate this responsibility to other members of the Royal Family in some cases, but His Majesty still presides over the ceremonies at the older ones, such as Chulalongkorn and Thammasat Universities, even though they extend over several days.

In the past two decades, His Majesty has tended to devote himself exclusively to his developmental projects and the performance of his other duties in Thailand. In earlier years, however, he paid State Visits to more than 30 countries and met nearly all the leaders of the contemporary world. He also entertained visiting monarchs and heads of state when they visit Thailand and thus maintains a broad knowledge of current international affairs.

In June of 1988, King Bhumibol Adulyadej became the longest-reigning monarch in Thai history, surpassing in that month the 42-year reign of his grandfather, King Chulalongkorn. In 1996, His Majesty celebrated his Golden Jubilee, an even more notable landmark that makes him the longest-reigning monarch in today's world. For the past half century, because of His Majesty's dedicated hard work, foresight and wisdom, Thailand has achieved much in terms of economic growth, general well-being of the people, and security for the nation.