

A KING FOR ALL

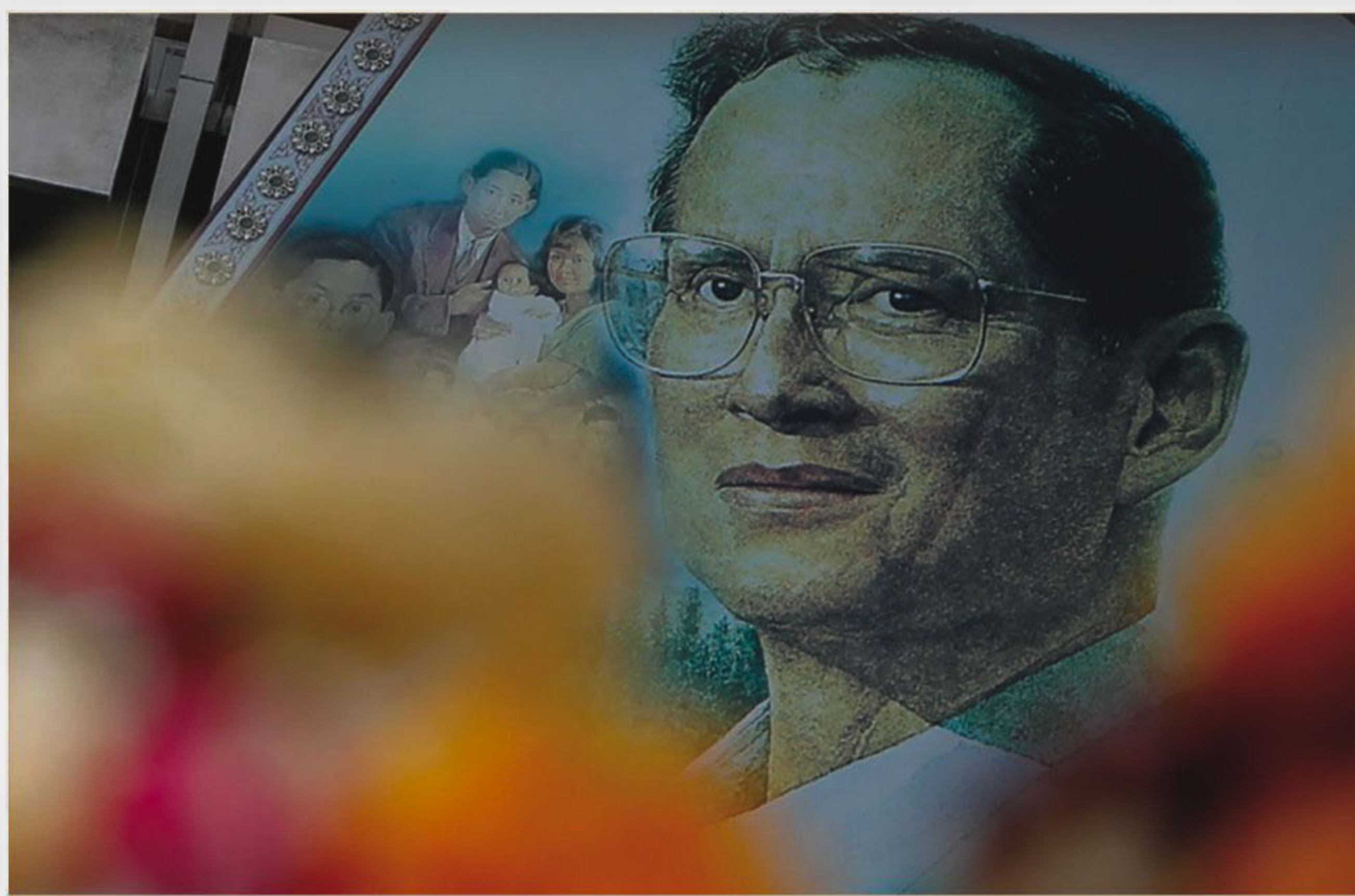
A foreigner's perspective

MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

HAVING visited Thailand for over five times during my lifetime, I would like to believe that I learnt quite a lot about the country and its culture.

Every time one walks into a theatre in Bangkok and indeed around the entire country, what precludes the movie is quite fascinating for foreigners to observe.

So what do I know about Thailand? What do I know about politics? What does a 21-year-old University of Toronto student know about foreign kings and their legacies? Well firstly,



A portrait of Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej at the Siriraj Hospital in Bangkok.

PHOTO: EPA

never do I claim to be an expert on these issues nor am I well-educated about the life of King Bhumibol. In fact, his name hasn't even been mentioned once in my history or political science courses.

underdeveloped Thailand in the mid-20th century may have been a drastic measure designed by the Thai establishment to boost public confidence, but it worked wonders.

great statesman. Having said that, it would be surprising to know that Bhumibol in constitutional terms had no political power.

controversial Lèse-majesté (based on Thai Criminal Code Section 112, making it illegal to defame, insult or threaten the king, queen, heir-apparent or regent) might seem like a farce to democracy.

King Bhumibol touched the hearts of his people, and he touched mine. Seventy years of serving a nation and its people, even amidst the luxurious life he did lead, is not a matter of joke.

A king of duty, a king of the people - the heart and soul of Thailand. His legacy must live on. May King Bhumibol rest in peace.

The writer is a student of Economics and International Relations, University of Toronto.

International ly, King Bhumibol had the reputation of an astute unifier, an ally to the West and a truly great statesman. Having said that, it would be surprising to know that Bhumibol in constitutional terms had no political power.

Living in the now

SHIFTING IMAGES



MILIA ALI

I truly believe that happiness can flow from small things. Time spent with loved ones, an uplifting word from a casual acquaintance, a chance meeting with a long lost friend; all these seemingly mundane things can make us happy.

reunions. These events, although always satisfying follow an interesting sequence. As we cross major milestones in our lives, our relationships and interactions with friends also undergo a simultaneous transition.

At the 10-year class party, everyone is out there to impress. Despite the prevailing spirit of bonhomie, each one tries to outsmart the other with success stories about dotting spouses, super intelligent children, prestigious careers and material acquisitions.

There is a noticeable change in the interactions at the 30-year class party - all of us are carefree and lighter in outlook. It's almost like reverting to our childhood and youth.



ILLUSTRATION: MARIE CARDOUAT

comfortable in sharing life's joys and woes. It's like pressing the refresh button and starting all over again with renewed vigour and energy.

With the passage of time, my relationships with old school friends have undergone this gradual transition. However, it's not just my relationships - there has been an overall change in my attitude toward life.

climbed nor oceans to be crossed. I have simply unchained my thoughts and started enjoying the simple pleasures, with more intensity than ever before.

At a recent dinner our host introduced us saying: "Hi Milia. This is... She is an aspiring singer. I thought you could share your experiences with her since you are a pro."

I felt dejected for a brief moment, wondering if indeed my worth is only of historical interest. Luckily, my positivity resurfaced since I realised that my happiness is not derived from lost glory or a promising future but from living in an unencumbered present.

In that vein, I will continue to embrace the little joys of life that come my way each day while waiting earnestly for the next class reunion.

The writer is a renowned Rabindra Sangeet exponent and a former employee of the World Bank.

With the passage of time, my relationships with old school friends have undergone this gradual transition. However, it's not just my relationships - there has been an overall change in my attitude toward life. It's as if the carefree, youthful aspects of my personality have resurfaced from a subterranean past.

QUOTABLE Quote



OSCAR WILDE

We are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS: 1 Richmond's River, 6 Fires, 11 Find Charming, 12 Texas City, 13 Make Butter, 14 "Iliad" author, 15 Writer Follet, 16 Church topper, 18 Gallery fill, 19 Anvil's place, 20 Capp and Pacino, 21 Spring, 23 TV's Philbin, 25 Descartes' conclusion, 27 Decline, 28 Like some beer, 30 Unseen problem, 33 Fitting, 34 Uno doubled, 36 Dambuilding.org, 37 Roofed proch, 39 Game caller, 40 Have -- to grind, 41 Happy, e.g., 43 Messy places, 44 Stand, 45 Bridge costs, 46 Tenth president, DOWN: 1 Wolf's cousin, 2 Stick, 3 Hiking path, 4 Go astray, 5 Intuit, 6 Globes, 7 Soothing plant, 8 Pol's place, 9 Rings, 10 Tender areas, 17 Pitch's kin, 22 Contrived, 24 Balloon contents, 26 Folly, 28 Willing to try, 29 Seed holder, 31 Disinclined, 32 Set electrician, 33 "Halt!" from a salt, 35 Egypt's Anwar, 38 Skating jump, 42 Twisted

Crossword puzzle grid with numbers 1-46.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWER: LIMB, POPPA, ODOR, PIPEUP, SOLE, AVENG, ELEVATOR, IMITATOR, TATTOO, HOE, OKAYS, BLAZE, MIX, SLATED, ANIMATOR, EDUCATOR, BUSTED, MINE, USURPS, INCA, DEPOT, EYED

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

