

Our Beloved King, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej



His Majesty the King conversing with the local populace who came to greet Him during a visit to a Royally Initiated Development Project



**HIS EXCELLENCY GENERAL
PREM TINSULANONDA**

*President of the
Privy Council and
Statesman, Kingdom of
Thailand*

"We will reign with righteousness, for the benefit and happiness of the Thai people." This inaugural royal

pledge graciously given by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, King Rama IX of Thailand, has been echoing in our hearts ever since the coronation day, May 5, 1950. From that day on, not even one day has passed without him feeling heartfelt concern about his subjects' lives. His Majesty always takes his subjects' difficulties as if they were his own, and he would not hesitate to tackle them. It is not an exaggeration, therefore, to say that we are

truly blessed to be his subjects. The following are a few examples of the royal activities and projects that will have an everlasting impression not only on me, but on all Thai people.

Domestically, one of His Majesty's major concerns is his subjects' standard of living. If the Thai people can live their lives comfortably enough without having to struggle for such basic needs as food or shelter, other social problems can be miti-

gated. His Majesty's royal addresses clearly reflect the importance of agriculture to the nation and its people:

"The prosperity of the country relies on ensuring that the prosperity of agriculture is given top priority."

One might have heard of His Majesty's "New Theory" a few years ago. It is, indeed, not new at all, for he thought of its principles and concepts quite a long time ago. According to His Majesty, "the New Theory is one way to enable the people to have enough food; they won't be rich but they will have sufficient food and won't go hungry."

His Majesty takes natural water supply very seriously, as was reflected in his speech delivered at Chitralada Villa on March 17, 1986: "It is important for us to have water to drink and use because life is here. If there is water, we can survive. If there is no electricity, we also can survive. But if there is electricity but no water, we cannot survive."

Famous royal projects dealing with water management are the Rainmaking Project, the Chaipattana Aerator, and the Kaem Ling Project (Monkey Cheek Pro-

of tubes and propellers. Several models of the Chaipattana Aerator have been used to help treat water in swamps, ponds, and many other waterways. Interestingly, His Majesty appears to be the only monarch in the world to have received patents on product inventions, one of which is, of course, the award-winning Chaipattana Aerator Model RX-2.

In addition to the management and treatment of water resources, His Majesty has given much concern to flood management. The Kaem Ling – or Monkey Cheek – Project is designed to keep water from flooding important areas, by diverting it into designated "monkey cheeks." They might be canals or manmade waterways outside the areas capable of holding the floodwater. They are to hold the water until the seawater has gone down enough for gravity to release the floodwater from the "monkey cheek." The Kaem Ling Project has worked out well in many flood-prone areas, thus preventing a lot of agricultural and economical damage.

All the above royal projects and activities clearly demonstrate that, since his accession to the throne 60 years ago,

seen in every aspect of his impeccable manner and unsurpassed sense of selfless sacrifice.

He is not only our King, he is also our father.

This year marks the auspicious 60th anniversary of His Majesty's accession to the throne. We celebrate, and the best way to celebrate is to follow in His Majesty's footsteps, fulfill His Majesty's wishes, and give back what we owe him and Thailand.



KHUNING SUDARAT KEYURAPHAN

Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Kingdom of Thailand

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej has been in the hearts of the Thai people for more than 60 years. Under the constitution, His Majesty is bestowed with the status of head of state of the kingdom. It is apparent that the King has contributed extensively to the country and the Thai people. This has not been exaggerated, since one may witness many activities His Majesty has initiated and undertaken for the benefit of the Thai people all over the kingdom.

His Majesty, also known as "Father of the Land," regularly visits Thai people around the country, which enables him to attend to the hardships and the needs of his people. Records reveal that many royal projects have been designed to offer alternatives or solutions to problems to do with sustainability and self-reliance, so as to promote the welfare of the people and their economic prosperity. These cover agriculture, irrigation, livestock development, fisheries, land reform and development, deforestation, rural development, etc.

In the field of agriculture, His Majesty has a very clear vision. He often seeks firsthand information by talking with farmers, village leaders, and government officials. Afterward, preliminary plans are prepared by the government authorities concerned with further action and implementation, as necessary. Against the backdrop of globalization, the King has graciously advised government officials and the Thai people on how to lead their lives according to the concept of self-sufficiency.

Since the agricultural sector has historically been the backbone of the kingdom, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives has followed in his footsteps by encouraging farmers to become truly self-reliant.



His Majesty the King giving lectures on water resource management to students during a visit to the Raj Prachanukbbrob 13 Spillway and Laem Phak Bia Environmental Research and Development Project, under the Royal Initiation of His Majesty the King (above and right)

ject). The Rainmaking Project, conceived by His Majesty in 1955, when looking up to the clouds during a royal visit to a northeastern province, has evolved to become an operating center to relieve drought throughout the country. Thanks to its perfect combination of the right amounts of nontoxic chemical substances, wind speed, altitude, temperature, and humidity, all farmers have to do is to make ready their water containers!

A lot of polluted water with low oxygen levels is no more useful than no water at all. The Chaipattana Aerator, one of His Majesty's mechanical inventions, is an electrical device that adds oxygen by stirring up polluted water using various types

His Majesty has never stopped dedicating himself to his subjects' welfare, by ceaselessly seeking ways to bring about prosperity and happiness to the country. His greatness as a ruler-educator has earned him the love and respect of all Thai people. His Majesty has given so much to his subjects and his country without discrimination or returns of any kind. We all then shall do our best to help lessen His Majesty's concerns, though it may not even be close to a fair return for what we owe to His Majesty and the country. Nonetheless, if one wishes to do good, to be a good person for oneself and for society as a whole, one need look no further for an excellent example. It can be



For example, the Royal Irrigation Department, Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, has undertaken many royal projects in response to increased water inflow, and has adequately stabilized the water quantity for efficient management by inter- and intra-river-basin diversion, from surplus areas to deficit areas. These measures are to ensure water stability and the mitigation of water-shortage problems in the long run.

Furthermore, the Bureau of Royal Rainmaking and Agricultural Aviation had been established under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, in response to His Majesty's project, with a view to mitigating drought conditions in needy areas.

Another example is the setting up of the Royal Project Foundation, aimed at substituting opium cultivation with high-value crops and vegetable cash crops in the hill tribes of the northern region. The project not only reduced the opium supply, but also improved the living standards of the people.

The Thai people and the world have recognized and appreciated the benevolence of His Majesty in his tireless contribution to the welfare of the country and his people, fulfilling the pronouncement made at his solemn coronation, which reads: "We will reign with righteousness,

for the benefit and happiness of the Thai people."

In my capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives, I believe that His Majesty the King might rightly be called an "agriculture monarch." His initiatives, wisdom, and endless efforts have made the country prosperous in a stable and sustained fashion.

In my last remarks before concluding, I invite all Thai people and residents of Thailand to join me in solemnly declaring, "Long live the King."



PRAMOTE MAIKLAD
*Senator and Former
Director General,
The Royal Irrigation
Department, Kingdom
of Thailand*

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej has devoted nearly half a century to various kinds of royal projects, initiated to develop remote regions of Thailand and improve the lives of the locals.

What impressed me, as a member of His Majesty's irrigation team for 22 years, was his acute awareness of the vital importance of water, his unflinching eagerness to solve water problems, and his genius for

putting relevant theories into practice.

Therefore, it was my greatest fortune to have worked with the King, who has had a grand vision for the country and has never ceased to care for the well-being of his people.



CHATRI SOPHONPANICH
*Chairman,
Bangkok Bank*

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the longest-reigning monarch in Thai history, is undoubtedly at the center of all Thai people's hearts. The love and devotion we feel for our King goes beyond respect for his position.

Throughout his 60-year reign, he has shown nothing but selfless devotion toward his country and people. He has never once broken the promise he made in his coronation speech that he would rule according to a strict code of justice and ethics for the utmost benefit of all people of Thailand.

During his 60 long years on the throne, he has initiated more than 3,000 royal projects to support the well-being of the Thai people. He has a particular interest in the development and better man-

agement of natural resources in rural areas. The places where he experiments and practices his initiatives are nowhere but his very own royal palaces. Instead of creating a nice tropical garden for his pleasure, he chose to turn a large part of his palace into labs and barns. The sacrifice he has made for his people is beyond explanation. Our hearts are filled with love and devotion.

His talents in other areas, such as art, public health, and the economy, are also undeniable. When the country faced an economic crisis in 1997, most people lost their jobs and had to live with difficulties. He introduced the concept of the “sufficiency economy,” essentially the art of self-reliance, which is an effective counter to feelings of helplessness and depression and a way of meeting life’s challenges.

Our King Bhumibol is truly “a father to all Thai people” – a father who always protects and takes care of everyone in his home, the Kingdom of Thailand, no matter what roots we have or what religion we follow. We feel fortunate and grateful indeed to have been born under the protective shield of the King.

Bangkok Bank is deeply grateful for his kindness in granting us the auspicious royal insignia, the Royal Garuda, for 39 years. It has inspired us to contribute to the country and to all Thai people.

Bangkok Bank’s executives and employees join with all the citizens of Thailand to wish His Majesty long life, great health, and eternal happiness.



DR. SUMET TANTIVEJKUL
*Secretary General,
The Chaipattana
Foundation, Bangkok*

Last year, on May 5 – Coronation Day – those who had received the most illustrious order of Chula Chom Klao

had an audience with His Majesty at the Dusit Maha Prasat Throne Hall. After leaving the chapel to pay homage at the Royal Pantheon, His Majesty was passing our group when he paused a little, turned to me, and said, “How is the Wat Mongkol project? Have you been to visit? We had so much fun back then, didn’t we?” Of course, even a short conversation with His Majesty creates the greatest delight and gladness, but the more we listened to what His Majesty said about the past, the more appreciative I felt, and I thought back to the time when I worked for His Majesty as Secretary General of the Royal Development Projects Board (RDPB), after 1981. It was the time when I experienced the greatest happiness and enjoyment I have ever known in my working life.

During that time, because he always visited every region of the country, His Majesty spent over half of each year outside the capital, causing us to follow and

frequently spend several days and nights in different parts of the nation. In those days before RDPB boarding houses had been built, we had to stay at hotels or guesthouses run by governmental organizations, very often the Irrigation Department. We worked hard and always experienced great adventures.

Almost every other day, His Majesty traveled to visit different projects and his people. He always went out in the afternoon and returned very late at night. When traveling to stay at Hua Hin, we would encounter hot weather; when taking a trip to the south, we would experience rain; when we journeyed to the northeast, we would go through both hot and chilly conditions; and when we went to the north, we would have to bear the wintry climate and rough paths. Even though the weather was harsh and the trails were so rough that His Majesty had to travel by helicopter most of the time, he never complained. Conversely, I noticed that he took pleasure in relieving the plight of his subjects and solving the problems of the kingdom.

Throughout the visits, His Majesty was so kind, and taught us continually. We have learned so many things about how we can truly serve our country.

A lot of times that I guided His Majesty, we got lost along the way, even though we had maps and proper equipment. It was soon discovered that His Majesty knew every inch of his land and every detail of his people.

One example is when His Majesty went to Pru Kae Kae and ordered us to change a plan suddenly, leaving us in great chaos. I remember that evening he wanted to travel to observe another area, so we had to change the plan in the middle of the woods. That led us to meet Uncle Wadeng, who brought us joy and laughter.

While we were getting off the helicopter when we had reached Kalasin Province, His Majesty told us that he wanted to visit Lam Payeng first. Our group, having many experts in it, including an engineer from the Irrigation Department and map soldiers with special ranks and titles such as Colonel and Ph.D., had to promptly alter the plan. After the royal cavalcade moved, we were very happy to pick up a villager who was walking along the road wearing only a loin-cloth, because he told us that he knew the way to that area.

We took responsibility for leading the way by asking that villager and finding the directions on the map. We kept driving until we discovered that there was no proper road to follow anymore, so we had to drive along an incredibly rough and bumpy path, through huge pieces of rocks beside a canal. It was so rutted that His Majesty named that path a “disco” path. After wobbling along for quite some time, until we ran into a long

embankment that prevented us from going further, we were finally at our wits’ end. We didn’t know where to turn, so we had no other choice but to stop in the middle of the rice field. His Majesty got out of the car, complained, and asked us where we were going. He said that we had got lost at the first junction and added that we had come the wrong way. The right way was not this far. That night, we were lucky that it was so dark. His Majesty didn’t have a chance to see that our faces had suddenly changed color because of our shame and guilt. Instead of us leading His Majesty, this time he had to lead us, and like he said, it was not that far at all. This experience left us laughing and His Majesty was not angry at us after all.

Another impressive and hard-to-forget image is of His Majesty when he had recovered from a sickness and started working again after some time off. That first day back, he traveled to Cha-am District, where the Huai Sai Royal Development Study Center is located. I remember vividly that, after graciously granting initiatives, he asked the royal cavalcade to stop beside a valley called Saboo Valley. Although the sun had nearly set, the glittering light was still apparent. Birds began to fly back to their nests. I saw His Majesty taking photographs of the surroundings. A cool breeze was blowing with a little drizzle of rain. It was so refreshing. During those hours, His Majesty was so happy. He said that he hadn’t been outside like this for quite some time. He made it clear that he was thoroughly enjoying his return to work. Since then, many of his projects have begun to make progress, one after another, and now they have spread to almost every corner of the country.

I want all Thai people to understand that the starting point for these projects was not His Majesty’s office. On the ground, in the water – when he traveled by boat – and in mid air, His Majesty was able to think of projects that created numerous benefits for his subjects. It is their recollections that are hard to forget.

As for the Wat Mongkol Chaipattana Project, which His Majesty mentioned to me on May 5 this year, the starting point was even more amusing. His Majesty asked us to find an area and a temple according to his descriptions, which were told in a story. “Back in the period of King Rama V, there was a man whose name was hidden. He traveled with his grandfather to make merit at the Buddha’s footprint. On their way back, they stopped to make merit with 80 chang (the old Thai currency before it was changed to baht) at the temple.” His Majesty sometimes gave us a puzzle like this to figure out. If we couldn’t work it out, we couldn’t succeed in the mission given. With only a short story, we had to find that temple. Finally we found Wat Mongkol and he said it was the correct one.



His Majesty the King, accompanied by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, during a visit to Huai Sai Agricultural Research and Development Centre

As we explored the temple in disguise, we were told a bizarre story. The villagers told us that several of them had had a dream about His Majesty, in which the unfinished chapel was completed with the help of a noble person. The next morning, we disguised ourselves as local millionaires who wanted to buy up pieces of land, but it was unsuccessful. The villagers didn't believe us because we told them that we would buy these pieces of land and develop them for the benefit of the villagers. Who would believe us? Are there any investors like that in the world? The disguise was exposed when we were trying to buy the land from Uncle Somchit. There was a calendar hanging on the wall in his house. The picture in the calendar was of His Majesty and the whole gang of fake millionaires. Uncle Somchit accidentally glanced at the calendar and noticed the likeness between ourselves and the gang in the calendar. The gang then had to tell the truth, and the purchase became much easier.

After that, the development took place. When the villagers come to make merit, they can also take the opportunity to gain agricultural knowledge at the back of the temple, which was designed as a water resource to grow rice, carry out farming, and plant orchards. His Majesty was very pleased with this development.

Since that day, the phrase "New Theory" has become well known to all people around the country.

As you can see, each project has its own interesting, exciting, amusing, and memorable story, which enabled us to put all the exhaustion behind us, as His Majesty reminded me on May 5, 2005 – Coronation Day, a meaningful day for all Thai people.

Today, we have to admit that we feel lonely because we don't have an opportunity to follow and accompany His Majesty as before. Even the short conversation that he had with me at the Temple of the Emerald Buddha has left a cheerless feeling in my heart. The "benefits that come from happiness" that His Majesty has created for his kingdom are too magnificent to completely put into words. Even if the sun was too strong, the rain was pouring, or he had to climb countless mountains, walk in mud, or in floods, he would be willing to devote his might to his people. For the past 59 years, His Majesty has done a great deal to make this land secure, stable, strong, and serene. We are all responsible for cherishing and taking care of our treasures and helping to alleviate the heavy burdens that His Majesty has been carrying for more than half a century. If the Thais follow His Majesty's concept of "knowledge, affection, and solidarity,"

and sacrifice a bit of comfort for the good of the whole, this country and its treasures will pass to our successors in the future.

May Your Majesty continue to enjoy the blessings of a prosperous and long life.



HAROLD LINK

Managing Partner, B. Grimm & Co., R.O.P., Bangkok

From my earliest childhood, my father, who was the Thai Consul General to Hamburg for nearly 40 years, would tell me repeatedly how fortunate Thailand was to have an enlightened monarch. He always praised him as a shining example of exemplary leadership. Later, when I went to live in Thailand after studying in Switzerland, my uncle would tell me the same thing.

Today, Thais and foreigners residing in Thailand alike know that His Majesty is an extraordinary role model for life. They can also rest assured that their monarch will lead his people out of any crisis, as has been proven more than once, even when no solution seems possible.

It makes us feel humble and want to follow his lead. ●

Open Skies, Open Arms

An Interview with Wanchai Sarathulthai, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Transport and Communications, and Chairman, Thai Airways International PCL (THAI), Bangkok



Wanchai Sarathulthai

EDITORS' NOTE Prior to assuming his current position, Wanchai Sarathulthai served as Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Transport and Communications, Director General of the Thai Meteorological Department, and Director General of the Marine Department. He holds an M.A. in political science from Ramkhamhaeng University and an LL.B. from Thammasat University.

COMPANY BRIEF Founded in 1960, nationalized in 1977, and publicly listed on the Stock Exchange of Thailand in 1991, Thai Airways International PCL (THAI) is the national carrier of the Kingdom of Thailand, operating domestic, regional, and intercontinental flights from its home base in Bangkok to key destinations around the world. Employing more than 25,700 people, THAI is a founding member of the integrated worldwide air-transport network Star Alliance.

There is a new spirit at THAI. How is the airline being revitalized, and what plans were made for the expected increase in tourism and travel during the celebrations honoring His Majesty the King?

In honor of the 60th anniversary celebrations of His Majesty's accession to the throne, this year has been designated as Thailand Grand Invitation Year. To com-

plement this auspicious occasion, THAI and the Tourism Authority of Thailand invited our Star Alliance partners to take part in this event through the Star Alliance Visit Thailand Campaign. This campaign was initiated with the aim of increasing traffic to Thailand by an expected 20 percent. Campaign initiatives include advertising within the in-flight magazines of all 16 member airlines; in-flight promotional videos onboard Star Alliance network flights; and an online marketing toolkit for promotional communications, public relations, and sales promotions with Thailand Airpass in three key markets: Japan, Korea, and Germany.

In addition, THAI introduced the Grand Season Campaign 2006, to attract more business and leisure travel to Thailand during the festive season, running from April to September 2006. We are offering attractive THAI products like the Royal Orchid Holiday Grand Invitation Package, the Homecoming Invitation Package, and the Meeting and Incentive Package in cooperation with the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau. All products and activities are designed according to the calendar of Thailand Grand Invitation Year.

The Prime Minister has called for "open skies." What does this mean?

The open skies policy was adopted by Thailand in 1998, with the aim of promoting Thailand's tourism industry and developing Bangkok as a top Asian aviation hub by allowing foreign airlines to carry third and fourth freedom traffic into Thailand with unlimited frequency and capacity. To attract more foreign airlines to Thailand, the government is considering giving full liberalization to more bilateral partners in the near future.

What are the details of your expansion plans?

During the 2005 to 2006 winter season, THAI opened three direct flights per week from Bangkok to Moscow, in order to facilitate both business and tourism traffic between Thailand and Russia. We also operate two flights per week from Bangkok to Islamabad in Pakistan, in addition to the existing flights to Karachi and Lahore in

that country. During the next winter season, THAI will launch three weekly services to Johannesburg in South Africa.

THAI's policy is not only to open new destinations, but also to enhance flexibility and convenience for passengers through increasing flight frequency on the major routes. This season, THAI has added extra flights to Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Frankfurt in Europe; Kolkata in India; Osaka and Fukuoka in Japan; and Guangzhou in China.

THAI's eight new A340-500 and A340-600 aircraft make this expansion possible. The three ultra-long-range A340-500 operating to New York feature a 215-seat, three-cabin configuration. Royal silk class offers unprecedented standards of hospitality for executive class passengers, with 60 shell-type seats. Premium economy class has 42 spacious seats, while economy class has 113 seats.

The A340-600 is designed for medium- to long-range flights, and it is configured with a total of 267 seats in three classes. The royal first class cabin has eight shell-type seats with 83-inch pitch and 180-degree recline, arranged in a single row setting for the utmost comfort and privacy. The royal silk class has 60 shell-type seats with 60-inch pitch and 170-degree recline, and the economy class cabin has 199 seats with a recline angle of 115 to 122 degrees and 32- to 34-inch pitch, in 2-4-2 configuration. All seats in our A340-500 and A340-600 aircraft have individual video screens with a video-on-demand system.

The reconfiguration program for the existing fleet is progressing. Twelve out of 18 B747-400 planes will be reconfigured with new seats and in-flight entertainment to A340 standards. All eight B777-200 aircraft will be fitted with new lie-flat seats, in a 2-2-2 configuration and with full interactive on-demand in-flight entertainment, while economy class will have new seats in a 3-3-3 format, with expected completion by November 2006. In addition, all six B777-300 aircraft will be retrofitted with new seats and in-flight entertainment, to the same standard as the B777-200ER interior. First delivery will be in October 2006. ●



*a Tribute
to a King*

The Airport-tropolis

An Interview with Somchai Sawasdeepon, Senior Executive Vice President and General Manager, Suvarnabhumi Airport Operations, Airports of Thailand Plc (AOT), Bangkok



Somchai Sawasdeepon

EDITORS' NOTE With a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering and a master's degree in business administration, Somchai Sawasdeepan has served in technical, administrative, and managerial positions in several government ministries, state enterprises, and public companies. He has served as assistant managing director of procurement and senior executive vice president of administration for the New Bangkok International Airport Co., Ltd.. Prior to assuming his current position he was senior executive vice president and project director of management and construction for the Suvarnabhumi Airport Project for Airports of Thailand Plc. In addition to his current post, he is chairman of the board of directors of Thai Aviation Refueling Co, Ltd.

COMPANY BRIEF Founded in 1979 and a limited public company since 2002, the Airports of Thailand Plc (AOT), is a state enterprise under the Thai Ministry of Transport. The company's registered capital is currently THB 14.3 billion, and in 2005, AOT reported an operating profit of THB 9,638.2 million. The five major airports currently under AOT management are Bangkok International Airport, Chiang Mai International Airport, Hat Yai International Airport, Phuket International Airport, and Chiang Rai International Airport. Suvarnabhumi Airport,

currently under construction, is the sixth airport in the AOT group. In 2005, the airports accommodated 47.3 million passengers on 330,364 flights. The New Bangkok Int. Airport Co. Ltd. (NBIA), a subsidiary of AOT, was established in 1996 as the organization primarily responsible for the construction of the Suvarnabhumi Airport, coordinating relevant state and private-sector entities.

The construction of Suvarnabhumi Airport is a mega project. What makes this airport bigger and better than the others?

It accommodates about 45 million passengers a year. We also have commercial duty-free operations, which we operate differently than other international airports. We concentrate on providing good facilities, prices, and quality of product. We are having an independent consultant come in several times a year to check the price and quality of the goods to make sure we remain competitive.

How do you make travel easier for passengers than it is at other international airports?

We have a strategy to always provide the "service smile" to our passengers; our officers will service our passengers with a smile and take care of them. We believe we are a passenger-oriented airport. We have everything under one roof – domestic and international – so you don't have to run from one terminal to another. We have people-mover systems so that people don't have to walk so much. Furthermore, we have transportation for handicapped passengers. Also, we have the in-line screening baggage handling system to screen baggage. It has the latest technology and we are the first airport outside the U.S. to utilize this explosive-detection and scanning system. So we are up to speed with the Transportation Security Administration's requirements. Our airport information management system also links all of our systems together to maximize our efficiency.

How is the airport's architectural design unique?

There are traditional Thai architec-

tural features built into the airport. The concourse buildings have pointed and sloping roofs, and there are glass doors etched with traditional Thai designs and Thai artwork in the buildings.

How big an event was the airport opening?

It was a major event. We became operational at the end of June. However, we landed two aircraft in September of 2005, an Airbus A340 and a 747 jumbo jet. So the airport proved early that it can handle such aircraft.

Does this airport accommodate the new developments in aviation?

Yes. Everything is designed for the new Airbus A380, from the taxiways to the runways and parking positions. This is a state-of-the-art airport.

What is your overarching vision for the airport?

The Thai government has talked about this being an "airport-tropolis" – a combination of a metropolis and an airport. The airport has its own district in Bangkok, and its surrounding areas will develop in concert with it. It's not just an airport; it's much more than that. So we see many opportunities for investors to take part in this district. For instance, there may be opportunities for duty-free zones, where materials can be imported, where Thai labor can be used for manufacturing, and where finished goods can then be exported. However, our major concern, until the recent past, was to get the airport completed and in to operation.

Now that the airport is open, we will further its development. We have designed it to handle 45 million passengers annually, but we have plans to develop it to handle 100 million to 120 million passengers a year. That may be 15 or 20 years down the road, but that's the potential of this airport.

You seem to have a very optimistic view.

This is Thailand's view, and the prime minister's. We look forward, not back. There is only one way to go with this airport: up. ●

The Suvarnabhumi Airport terminal