

*The Nation today joins the rest of the country in remembering the great contribution of King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V).*



NATION/THANIS SUTTO

# SINGING THEIR HEARTS OUT FOR THE KING

INSIGHTFUL, INTREND, INDEPENDENT

# THE SUNDAY NATION



## Tight security near Grand Palace over long weekend

THE SUNDAY NATION

SOME 1,500 police have been deployed to provide security in the Sanam Luang and Grand Palace area over the three-day long weekend, from yesterday till Monday, PM's Office Minister Suwapan Tanyuwattana said yesterday.

He urged people heading to the area to pay homage to HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej to use water transport, saying it was the most convenient way to get there.

Suwapan, in his capacity as secretary of a command centre set up to monitor the situation, said 200 additional medical staff would also be on duty to help any people who need assistance.

He urged drivers of charter vans and buses bringing people from the provinces to park at eight designated locations on the outskirts of Bangkok, then let people board city buses to the Sanam Luang and Grand Palace area. He said the command centre would hold another meeting on Wednesday to plan measures to accommodate the huge numbers expected to pay their respects to the late King's royal urn from next Friday (October 28).

Meanwhile, city police chief Pol Lt-General Sanit Mahathaworn said he had instructed more officers to guard Sanam Luang and smooth traffic in nearby areas while soldiers and "Tessakit" city law enforcers backed them up.

He said security cameras had been installed at 16 additional spots in the area to help keep order and monitor for any suspicious people or items.

Police have set up seven main checkpoints so people feel confident while visiting the Grand Palace to mourn the late King. Sanit urged people to avoid bringing vehicles, saying it would be better for the roads to be used for walking.

Traffic Police commander Pol Maj-General Jirasana Kaewsaeng-ek said 27 roads around Sanam Luang and Grand Palace were closed until Monday to accommodate the mourners who want to pay respect to the late King during the holiday period. Tomorrow is a public holiday in lieu of today, Chulalongkorn Day, which marks the passing of King Rama V.

The number of people who gathered at Sanam Luang for the mass singing of the Royal Anthem yesterday was huge and caused traffic congestion in some areas, so police would close 27 roads until Monday, Jirasana said.

He also urged motorists to use other routes such as Phitsanulok and Krung Thon bridges, while recommending that people get ferries to Tha Phrachan and Tha Chang piers.

For more information and updates, call 1197 around the clock or visit [www.trafficpolice.go.th](http://www.trafficpolice.go.th).

## Google denies monitoring social media

THE NATION

INTERNET giant Google has denied it is monitoring posts by Thai social media users but said it would simply consider Thai government requests to remove certain sensitive posts on a case-by-case basis.

Google was reacting to a claim by Deputy Prime Minister Prajin Juntong that it would help the government scan sensitive posts during the mourning period for His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

In a statement to *The Nation*, Google said: "We have always had clear and consistent policies for removal requests from governments around the world. We have not changed those policies in Thailand.

"We rely on governments around the world to notify us of content that they believe is illegal through official processes, and will restrict it as appropriate after a thorough review. All of these requests are tracked and included in our Transparency Report."

On Friday, Prajin said Google and video site YouTube would set up an ad-hoc team to work around the clock to monitor any posts considered offensive to the monarchy.

Ann Lavin, public policy and government affairs director at Google's Southeast Asia and Greater China office, was invited to meet Prajin as the government sought advice on how to handle lese majeste issues from Google and YouTube posts.



Thais wearing black in mourning for late HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej, with many also holding the King's portraits, gather for the Royal Anthem at Bangkok's Sanam Luang yesterday as part of an impressive performance in dedication to the beloved monarch.

# Massive turnout for anthem

ROYAL ANTHEM CROWD ESTIMATED AT 150,000 AS SANAM LUANG BECOMES A SEA OF BLACK

JUTHATHIP LUCKSANAWONG  
THE NATION

SANAM LUANG and surrounding roads were turned into a sea of black yesterday as a massive crowd of mourners from all over the country joined the heartfelt singing of the Royal Anthem in a historic assembly in memory of the beloved King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Despite the heat, the crowd stood calmly and sang as one, many with tearful eyes, while raising portraits of His Majesty and banknote bearing his image.

"When I am alone, I always miss him [the King]. I don't know what to do. So, I came here to join others in singing the Royal Anthem. I'm glad to be part of this epic moment," Sunee Boonrod, 70, Bangkok told *The Nation*.

The mass recital of the Royal Anthem was accompanied by a 200-piece orchestra and a 150-strong chorus under the baton of renowned music director Somtow Sucharitkul. The stage was set at the centre of Sanam Luang, a park adjacent the Grand Palace, where royal and religious rites have been taking place following the King's death on October 13 at the age of 89.

This most heartfelt tribute yesterday was filmed by prominent director MC Chatrichalerm Yukol and his 1,300-strong production crew, with 50 cameras, including two drones and cameras positioned on two cranes, as well as 25 microphones set up in six

locations to capture the event.

The film, which will include added footage of His Majesty's royal activities, will be shown on TV and cinemas across the country from next week.

The crowd at yesterday's event was estimated to be around 150,000, according to deputy police spokesman Maj-General Songpol Wattanachai. The number could have hit 250,000 if whole surface of Sanam Luang and the surrounding roads were filled, he said.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha expressed admiration for the thousands who took part in the event, especially those who had travelled long distances and began arriving very early in the morning.

Government Spokesman Lt-General Sansern Kaewkamnerd quoted the PM as saying that because everyone shared the same heart, and despite the burning sun, the people had created one of the greatest and most impressive spectacles showing Thai's respect and loyalty to the late King.

Crowds have been massing outside the Grand Palace, with many journeying from far-away provinces to pay respects to HM the King.

Some have pitched tents on a large grassy field outside the Royal compound, while others have slept on simple bamboo mats.

Overall, yesterday's event went smoothly, said new Bangkok Governor Pol General Aswin Kwanmuang.

"There are 2,000 security officers and seven security checkpoints. Also,

## Than Mui 'overwhelmed' by event

PARINYAPORN PAJEE  
THE SUNDAY NATION

IT took just four days to organise the filming of the mass Royal Anthem performance at Sanam Luang yesterday afternoon, where hundreds of thousands filled the park to sing together in honour of the King.

The idea was born when MC Chatrichalerm Yukol, aka "Than Mui", wanted to do something in memory to the King.

A small project idea at first quickly blossomed into the mass project.

"I'm overwhelmed at seeing a lot of people join the singing," Than Mui said.

The performance was captured by 50 cameras, 25 microphones, two drones and two cranes. Other footage will be added to it, such as footage of the King, and it will be shown in movie theatres and on TV next week.

"It's the last project we can do for the King," he said.

The movie, Than Mui said, would be

shown until the new King's reign begins. Than Mui's daughter, MR Srihumrung Yukol, was also overwhelmed by the response to the project.

"There were around 1,300 crew with six film-shooting units capturing the historic moment", she said.

Maestro Somtow Sucharitkul said it was a miracle to organise the event in such a short period. "This performance shows that our country can have a single voice. It unites us to be here and sing together," he said.

He hoped that yesterday was a symbol marking the beginning of a new conflict-free chapter of Thai history.

"The idea of this singing performance will be like we are concluding the country's history in two minutes," the composer said.

"The important thing is not the size of the crowd but the hearts of the people who gather here."

He added: "I wish our country will have a moment like this for good."

However, the source said most of the missing people were found.

But as of 5pm, dozens of the reported missing people remained lost, according to the source.

Meanwhile, hundreds of people of all ages passed out around noon yesterday at the height of the anthem event, according to a source of the joint safety command centre.

However, Aswin said there was no serious health cases, with most cases people passing out.

## Wheelchair-bound man's long trip of love for King

KITTIPONG MANEERIT,  
SURASAK RIMSEUB  
THE SUNDAY NATION

DISABLED man Pan Meunyt, 84, has travelled on his tricycle wheelchair from his northeastern hometown in Buri Ram's Lahan Sai district to Bangkok to pay respects to King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

The sufferer of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, a fatal neurological disease also known as Lou Gehrig's disease, finished the seven-day trip yesterday morning at the Grand Palace, receiving a warm welcome from fellow mourners. With his wheelchair bearing a portrait of the King, he described his action as "my humble farewell to His Majesty the King".

Many mourners had their photo taken with Pan and congratulated him for completing his journey. With tears brimming in his eyes, he smiled and said he was glad to finally be there. He signed a farewell message to the beloved monarch.

Pan said he was determined to reach Bangkok to express his gratitude for the many items he had received help from the King's royal projects including his wheelchair and prosthetics. He also said he had applied His Majesty's teachings to his own life to make him more content despite his illness. Pichit Sidadee accompanied Pan on the trip and said he had never felt so close to the King.

Government Spokesman Maj-



Officials and fellow mourners accompany disabled Pan Meunyt, 84, into the Grand Palace on his tricycle yesterday. Pan travelled from his hometown in Buri Ram to Bangkok to pay respects to the late King.

General Sansern Kaewkamnerd said that Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha had praised Pan and had instructed the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security to take care of his health, meals and transport during his stay in Bangkok and facilitate his return to Buri Ram.

Another wheelchair-bound man with the same illness, Sathit "Uncle Mhee" Janrangsi, 54, departed his hometown Phitsanulok province last Sunday en route to the Grand Palace and by yesterday morning he had reached Angthong province.

He is being accompanied by 28-

## SINGING FOR HM

## Amid sadness, Royal Anthem kindles hope

KORNCHANOK RAKSASERI  
SPECIAL TO THE SUNDAY  
NATION

YESTERDAY was another day of memories for me and my mother as we once more attended a historic event honouring His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

Ten years ago at the celebration of 60th anniversary of the King's accession to the throne at Royal Plaza, we looked at Thailand's past glories.

Yesterday, as we gathered to sing the Royal Anthem, we looked ahead to a bright future.

We felt hopeful about Thailand. It was more than just the unity of Thais loyal to the late, revered King, but a demonstration that we were stronger than we had thought. We saw people's kindness, friendship and willingness to help each other. We saw the determination of the people to do good in dedication to the King.

As unstintingly loyal as she is to HM King Rama IX, my 67-year-old mother did not spend even a second to think about attending this singing event. We left our home at 6.30am to avoid the traffic, and she walked a long way from where the bus dropped us off to Sanam Luang.

Although confusion over the programme and the lack of information held us back until 9.30am, there was enough space for us to put down our Bt20 plastic sheets as seats.

During the sound check and rehearsal at 10am, the master of ceremonies told us not to be shy and sing louder. But I could not.

My volume became lower each of the three times as I tried to hold back my tears. During the break afterwards, an old woman sitting next to me cried many times, saying she missed the King so much.

As the crowds kept coming, it took us about an hour to return from a lunch break outside Sanam Luang. My mother and I were afraid that we would not be able to find our seats, but suddenly a woman followed us and showed the way. She was one of the people who sat in the same area in the morning.

Afterwards, I heard some of the strangers in the area asking for Line ID, as they became friends. We felt more of the warmth in our heart.

When we were getting ready for the singing at 1pm, Sanam Luang was so quiet that we could hear the noise from across the street, where another sea of people queued up to pay respects to HM the King at the Grand Palace. And when the time arrived, we sang louder and louder. The tears and an overwhelmingly emotional feeling could not stop us.

What we now know for sure is that Thais can realise how much we can unite and will never forget how much we admire this revered, dedicated King. Thais and even our foreign friends are familiar with the phrase "sabai sabai" (easy, easy) as a characteristic of Thais, who have for long seen HM King Bhumibol as the pillar of their society and guardian. Yesterday's event showed if Thais are determined, we can achieve anything.

year-old restaurant owner Natthapat Sirimongkolpan, who joined Sathit on his bicycle in Nakhon Sawan's Phayuha Khiri district. They are expected to reach Bangkok on Tuesday.

Sathit said he loved His Majesty so much that every year he had done the same trip, except on those occasions he had sign messages wishing the King good health.

He said he was struck by grief when he heard about the King's passing, and he was determined to travel to Bangkok on his wheelchair to express his love and loyalty for the monarch and to join others in mourning him.





CHULARAT SAENGPASSA  
THE NATION

THE FIRST time Dr Boonyong Wongrukmit met His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej at a rural hospital half a century ago, he discovered an inexhaustible source of inspiration to work hard for the people.

"He was the King and I was just a rural doctor. But he showed up and told me that he had brought me the money I needed to expand the hospital's capacity," Boonyong recalled about that impactful moment.

"He told me he trusted me and permitted me to go ahead with the construction without having to go through a bureaucratic process."

The Bt240,000 in funds came from the King's personal pocket and fulfilled Boonyong's hope of ensuring the hospital could deliver better services to patients – many of them soldiers injured during operations fighting communist troops.

Boonyong had earlier submitted a report asking for money to boost the hospital's capacity to authorities. Somehow it got the King's attention.

"When the King spoke to me like that, my heart burst with energy. I became even more committed to my duty. I am determined not to slow down even a bit," the 83-year-old said.

After his graduation from Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Medicine, Boonyong chose to work in the provinces to care for the less privileged. In 1964, he was posted to Nan Hospital in the border province. In the following years, he treated many soldiers wounded in missions to prevent communist troops from taking over Thailand.

Boonyong recalled that in 1967, Their Majesties the King and the Queen led a fleet of helicopters into a fighting zone dominated by communists in Nan in the hope of rescuing an injured soldier.

Just as the doctor had heard about the King's caring attention to soldiers on duty and his people, the King heard about Boonyong's hard work too. That was why the King showed up in person to grant cash to Boonyong at the hospital in 1968.

"He also instructed me to inform him when the construction was completed. He would inaugurate the new hospital building," the doctor recounted.

When the construction was completed, Boonyong did not have the courage to invite the King because he was not sure he could prepare a proper ceremony. But one day, a senior palace official popped up and said the King had asked: "What about my building? Won't they allow me to open it?"

Boonyong said on hearing that, he spent one hour preparing a reception for their Majesties the King and the Queen. The ceremony was simple but touching. The royal couple graciously attended the inauguration ceremony in 1969, and granted Bt50,000 to patients at the hospital.

"The King was happy and smiling all the time," Boonyong said. "He also had his picture taken with hospital staff. I am convinced that it is a historic picture. I believe it is the first picture that their Majesties took with officials surrounding them."

Boonyong said years later he met the King again during a working visit to Nan province. "Still active, right? Let's stay put and work hard together," Boonyong quoted His Majesty as telling him.

Looking back, Boonyong said His Majesty added immeasurable meaning to his life. The much-revered monarch was the guiding light and a real example of dedication.

"While a doctor like me worked in a safe zone, he took a much riskier and more difficult route. Look at how he headed out to try to save an injured soldier in a live-bullet zone,"



These top three pictures show His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, in military uniform and accompanied by HM Queen Sirikit, on a visit to Nan Hospital in the Upper North half a century ago. At that time the border province was engaged in a fight against communist troops.

# Dedicated doctor follows in His Majesty's footsteps

HOW THE KING'S VISIT TO A RURAL HOSPITAL IN NAN PROVINCE INSPIRED DR BOONYONG



Dr Boonyong Wongrukmit, then a director of Nan Hospital, listens attentively to the King.



Their Majesties the King and the Queen have a picture taken with medical staff at Nan Hospital in 1969.

throughout his life, Boonyong found it almost unbelievable for a human to work as hard as the King did.

"I don't think we should complain about working hard. His Majesty never stopped working," he said.

Inspired by the King, Boonyong

decided to serve the public as best as he could. And embracing the monarch as his guiding light, Boonyong has become an inspiration for younger medical staff. At the Nan Hospital, medical staff follow the high standards he set.

They report to work on time. They do not take incentives from drug manufacturers. They work hard. They read a lot in a bid to keep pace with modern knowledge and technologies – that can be used to save lives and cure some

diseases more effectively.

Boonyong also emphasised to younger doctors that they must not turn away patients. Under his leadership, Nan Hospital has never told patients that there was no bed available for them.

"Even if all beds are full, it is necessary that they must find a way to admit the patient. Human lives are immeasurably precious," he said.

In Boonyong's eyes, patients are doctors' teachers. By treating a patient, doctors learn more, he said.

Boonyong has also reminded younger medical staff of the need to do their duties to the best of their ability.

"When there is an inpatient in a critical condition in the hospital, I always stayed overnight. That way, nurses could report the patients' condition to me every hour," he said.

Boonyong has never left Nan since he was posted there in 1964, because he believed in the causes he pursued. He has made a good impact on the healthcare sector of this northern province, which now boasts efficient and caring services.

Dr Kanit Tansiriwit, who succeeded Boonyong as the hospital's director in 1994 and remained in the post until he retired in 2008, said: "He passed on a great heritage. Teamwork is strong. Ethics are high. Other hospitals in the same zone always said to me that Nan Hospital can deliver a really impressive performance because there's Dr Boonyong Wongrukmit."

Kanit's two children are now doctors working in Nan. And both regard Boonyong as a great role model.

Boonyong may have sacrificed career advancement but he has lived a meaningful life. Indeed, this octogenarian is ranked on the prestigious list of the country's outstanding rural doctors. His alma mater, Chulalongkorn University's Faculty of Medicine, has also named him an outstanding alumni.

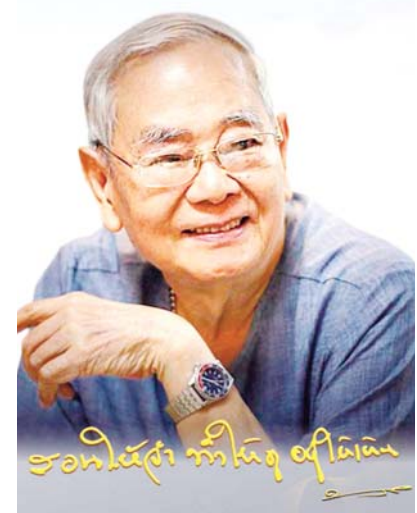
Doctors working in Nan all say that Boonyong is their inspiration.

After his retirement 23 years ago, Boonyong continued to work at the hospital for two more decades to take care of people. "His Majesty told me, 'Help take care of my people,'" he recounted.

Boonyong is no longer physically fit enough to work hard every day. But he has never stopped working. He now leads the Nan community in laying down concepts that will be useful for sustainable development and in line with His Majesty's initiatives.

"I deeply love and revere His Majesty. I am following in his footsteps," Boonyong said.

When the official announcement of the King's passing was made on October 13, Boonyong said he silently cried for about an hour. "I will head to Bangkok to pay respects before his royal urn one day. I always think about him. He has done so many things for Thailand and Thai people. I believe no one else can ever do this much," Boonyong said.



DR BOONYONG





**Nation Weekend Magazine's**  
Special photographic edition dedicated to  
His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej

Printed on 60-gram  
bond paper in full colour.  
Available from today.

สุดสัปดาห์  
**เนชั่น**

**Kom Chad Luek**  
Special Supplement

Printed on 60-gram  
bond paper in full colour.  
Issued with the  
October 19, 2016 edition.

**คม ชัด ลึก**



เสด็จสู่สวรรคาลัย  
๖ สถิตในดวงใจไทยนิรันดร์  
**คม ชัด ลึก**

For more information or to order your copy Call Tel 0-2338-3000 press 1  [customer@nationgroup.com](mailto:customer@nationgroup.com)  Nation call center

On working days from 09.00-12.00 and 13.00-16.00

# Crowd pours out its love for the King

IN AN HISTORIC EVENT YESTERDAY, HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF THAIS OCCUPIED SANAM LUANG AND LOUDLY SANG THE ROYAL ANTHEM TO EXPRESS THEIR LOVE FOR HIS MAJESTY KING BHUMIBOL ADULYADEJ. THE OCCASION WILL LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION ON THAIS AND PEOPLE WORLDWIDE. THE NATION'S JUTHATHIP LUCKSANAWONG ASKED MOURNERS WHO JOINED THE EVENT FOR THEIR IMPRESSIONS OF THE HEARTFELT MOMENT.



**Prakom Sornsiri, 14, from Bangkok:**

"I volunteered to help facilitate the elderly and handicapped who came to join the mass-singing event. When I escort the elderly who sit on wheelchairs and they say 'thank you' and wish me well, I feel blessed and encouraged to help the people and do good deeds in tribute to the late King."



**Tasanee Jemasukkase, 60, from Bangkok:**

"This is the last chance for me to join an event to express my condolences to the King. As I am Muslim, I am not in the position to join other religious ceremonies. So, this singing event is my rare opportunity.

"I did not tell my daughters that I came here as they were so worried about me and didn't want me to come due to my inflamed knee. I told them I went to a market. The King is always in mind since I think about him when I fry Nile tilapia [fish], which was introduced to Thais by the King. He had done so many things for us."



**Pornolmol Yuim, 69, from Uttaradit:**

"I left Uttaradit yesterday [Friday] evening and arrived at Sanam Luang at midnight. Despite no sleep, I will wait here and join the singing event until it finishes. This is too little compared to what our Father [the King did] – devoted himself to for the nation.

"I have just undergone knee surgery. However, I wanted to come."



**Surapong Rungratree, 88, from Pathum Thani:**

"I came here alone. I want to do something for my King. I am old and what I can do is come here to join the singing of the royal anthem.

"I saw him [the King] many times when he visited upcountry. I grew up at the same time as the King, as my birthday is six months after his. I feel profoundly connected to the King."



**Montri Panthung, 54, from Bangkok:**

"For 10 years, I have routinely prayed for him [the King], wishing him well. I am handicapped with deformed legs. But I knew I had to come. I will sing the royal anthem for him aloud to show how much I love and revere him. I am proud of my [garbage collecting] job as it helps keep our country, our land, clean."



**Sakdayuth Wansala, 23, of Bangkok:**

"I am proud [as a military staff member at Phramongkutklao Hospital] to help the people here. Dozens of people joining the event were sick and passed out. We reach out and help them to get first aid as soon as possible. I can't describe how much I feel blessed. I just want to do my best to help the people."



**Yiamkamol Kosonkij, 90, from Bangkok:**

"It is good that this event is held, so that Thais together can express their unity and their love of the King. The King will hear and see this.

"I have experienced two painful losses. The first was the demise of King Rama VIII. [But] among hundreds of the royal events over the last 80 years, this is the most tragic and painful. I will sing aloud as the royal anthem is the sung. I have heard it for a lifetime."



**Poonsiri Piromwong, 67, from Bangkok:**

"This is an auspicious day. Thai people came here to sing and show the world how much we love and revere our King. Thailand is unique in the way the people unite in their love for the beloved King. Thais love each other and value happiness and peace. Despite the current turmoil and division, we can unite and love each other when this moment of loss comes. The nation, religion, and the King are the most revered things for Thais. The demise of the King is so painful."



**Somruthai Nulasin, 26, from Rayong province:**

"I arrived here at 4am. I came along with my sister's daughter. I brought her here as I wanted to show her how much the people love the King and why. She is always curious about the late King as our family regularly talk about the King's good deeds and devotion."



**Vanika Chaloydam, 30, from Bangkok:**

"I wanted to be part of this grateful moment, so I deployed my skill in hair dressing to serve the people. Today is the first time our team [of 30 hairdressers] has cut people's hair for free in tribute to the King. Many people came from far away with little money to join the singing event. [We thought] it would be good if they had their hair cut for free. Between 7am and 10am, over 40 people used our service."



# SUNDAY Leisure

October 23, 2016 [www.nationmultimedia.com/sunday](http://www.nationmultimedia.com/sunday)



His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej trekked to remote areas with poor road infrastructure to guide the struggling and vulnerable communities toward self-sufficiency and independence. He always travelled with four simple tools: a pencil, a map, a camera and a walkie-talkie. HM the King, right, consulted with the hill tribes in such a way that they felt they could talk openly with him.



## Northern Highlands transformed

ALWAYS INTERESTED IN AGRICULTURE AND HORTICULTURE, HIS MAJESTY THE KING SUCCESSFULLY ERADICATED OPIUM POPPY CULTIVATION AND REPLACED IT WITH CASH CROPS THAT CONTINUE TO GENERATE A SUSTAINABLE INCOME FOR HILL TRIBE GROWERS

**KHETSIRIN PHOLDHAMPALIT**  
THE SUNDAY NATION

IN MY LONG career as a journalist, I have been fortunate to have had several chances to visit the country's northern highlands to learn how His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej succeeded in eliminating opium cultivation as well as covering the denuded hills with forest.

Struggling with motion sickness as I journeyed up the winding roads to the Royal Project sites – roads that are now covered with tarmac – made me only too well aware of the difficulties faced by His Majesty during his frequent trips to the highlands in the 1950s to 1960s. Indeed, he often alluded to these routes as “disco roads”, in a humorous reference to the shaking and bouncing suffered by the occupants of his car as it navigated unpaved roads deep in the countryside.

His Majesty trekked from one remote village to another to consult with the hill tribes in a manner that was far removed from how a king would normally communicate with his subjects.

“The way His Majesty spoke to them...they were very friendly. The King took a keen interest in their lives. There were very frank with His Majesty. (One) particular day, His Majesty asked the Hmong what, apart from opium, was their source of income. They said peaches – the small local peaches – and they told the King that the income from opium and from peaches was about the same,” the Royal Project Foundation's chairman HSH Prince Bhisadej Rajani is quoted as saying in the book “Royal Activities and International Cooperation” published by the National Identity Foundation in 2014.

Persuading the hill tribes in the far North to grow other crops in place of poppies was the first step and perhaps the most important. HM the King requested Kasetsart University to earnestly explore the potential for this inhospitable land, at the same time donating Bt200,000 from his private funds to set up the Royal Hill Tribe Assistance Project in 1969. In 1980, this was renamed the Royal Project and later in 1992, the Royal Project Foundation.

HM the King and other members of the Royal family began making frequent visits to hill tribe locations, which entailed a lot of climbing. One story tells of His Majesty walking through a jungle and up a mountain because he had heard about someone who had grafted three peach trees. Many people questioned why he would want to view three peach trees. “Everyone said it was very tough on the King to walk for an hour to see three plants,” Prince Bhisadej said in the book. “But His Majesty knew that by going there it would demonstrate a keen interest. And that was good pro-



The mountainous site of the Royal Agricultural Station Angkhang – once covered with opium poppies – is the main source of organic teas, temperate fruits, plants and flowers.



Different varieties of Asian pears are grown at the Royal Agricultural Station Angkhang.

motion for the plants.”

The launch of the Royal projects to develop high-altitude, cold-climate crops and prevent slash-and-burn agriculture, deforestation and the cultivation of narcotic plants meant that sizeable tracts of woodland could be salvaged, generating a natural water supply and nurturing the well-being of the hill tribes who call the northern highlands home.

Today, there are 38 Royal Project Development Centres spread over Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, Lamphun and Phayao provinces. Chiang Mai alone has more than 20 sites and these serve as living museums for anyone interested in learning about sustainable alternative living and how poverty can be alleviated.

The produce from the Royal Projects like strawberry, portobello and lingzhi mushrooms, avocados, figs, pears, mangoes, beans and rice, coffee and tea as well as processed foods and ready-to-drink fruit juices, bears witness to the success of the Royal Project Foundation's extensive study, research and experimentation in bringing sustainable development to the local people in each area.

Now a popular tourist destination, the Royal Agricultural Station Angkhang in Fang district of Chiang

Mai was the first research station set up in 1969. His Majesty spent his personal funds to set up this station to provide alternative sources of income for the villagers and they have responded by growing such temperate fruits as peach, Asian pear, kiwi and strawberry.

Standing 1,400 metres above sea level, this mountainous site – once covered with opium poppies – occupies a research area of 1,800 rai covering nine Shan, Lahu, Palong and Chinese Yunnan villages, for whom the station provides sanitation and health facilities.

“Here we focus on research into temperate fruits and plants and are now able to produce more than 300 species. We also educate the local people on new agricultural technologies and we have a training centre open to farmers from all the country. The Royal Forest Department donated the cultivable plots and each family received one rai to plant strawberries and cabbage. We buy all the agricultural produce and the proceeds after expenses go back to the villagers. They can earn Bt400,000 a year for their strawberries, while those who grow vegetables get about Bt70,000,” said Mayurin Yodsriwan, coordinator of the Angkhang Station.



The lingzhi mushroom cultivated at Teen Tok Royal Project is likely to be much in demand thanks to its medicinal properties.



Gae Noi Royal Project has the perfect soil and climate for growing leafy vegetables.



A Palong villager gently picks the fragile leaves at the Royal Agricultural Station Angkhang's organic tea plantation.

The highlight here is the organic tea plantation. Spread over 50 rai, the plantation is cared for by the Palong tribe – one rai for one family. The four main varieties are green tea, red tea, Yuanjue Oolong and Jinchain Oolong No 12, all of which are ideally suited to this climate.

Three kilometres from the Angkhang station is Khob Dong village, home to Lahu families who are the main producers of the Royal

Project's portobello mushroom. The species is of Australian origin and was introduced here just five years ago. There are currently 10 plant-thatched huts in which the mushrooms are grown and each produces some 200 kilograms every two months.

“The portobello mushroom requires a temperature of 10 to 20 Celsius and is relatively complicated to cultivate. The cap can measure from three to six inches in diameter and typically matures in November and December. So far, we have been able to produce about five to 10 kilograms a day and sell the mushrooms for Bt400/kg and also export them to Singapore,” the research station's official Puripong Kawichai told *The Sunday Nation* earlier this year.

Some 150 kilometres from Muang district of Chiang Mai and 1,000 metres above sea level, Gae Noi Royal Project in Chiang Dao district grows a variety of leafy vegetables plus mango, red bean and highland rice. The rainy season is a good period to grow two of the Royal Project's most famous products – red kidney and azuki beans. This site also produces four species of mangoes namely Nuan Kham, Palmer, R2E2, and Irwin cultivars which each boast a unique taste.

“His Majesty the King first visited

here in 1980 and introduced the local people to the cultivation of the kidney bean. It is easy to plant and nurture, requiring just full sun exposure and well-drained soil. It's a perfect crop for the long transportation from Gae Noi to Chiang Mai's Muang district. Fresh vegetables tend to be too easily damaged,” project official Yongyuth Khampaeng explained. “The first species of kidney beans were supported by the Agricultural Research Service of the US but now the royal project has developed its own species and distributed the plants to other development centres as a crucial step in weaning farmers from opium.”

Located in the same district is Nong Khieo Royal Project, home to some 1,000 Lahu, Lua, Akha and Kachin families and a centre for avocado cultivation which has now reached a production level of about 60 tons a year. Spread over 96 rai, the project has introduced the Buccanaer, Booth, Peterson, Hass and Pinkerton cultivars and these are being grown by 48 farmer members.

Teen Tok Royal Project in Mae On district of Chiang Mai is where shiitake and lingzhi (ganoderma) mushrooms as well as Arabica coffee are cultivated.

“We have about 100 members cultivating shiitake mushrooms and since April, we have started to promote the MT2 species of the lingzhi mushroom, which is high in polysaccharides and very much in demand by the market. So far we have three plant nurseries run by six farmers and we buy the fresh lingzhi from them for Bt300/kg. We expect to get at least 180 kg every six months,” said the project's official Narawuth Suthavass.

It's hard for visitors today to realise that these properties were once all bare hills covered with infertile soil and parched streams. HM the King launched thousands of projects over the decades to assist people and improve the land. He journeyed throughout the country's remote areas with four simple tools – a pencil, a map, a camera and a walkie-talkie.

“The camera was for documenting what he saw and helping him plan his work, and the maps were for double-checking locations with the people in the area. Government officials had drawn up the maps and he wanted to make sure they were correct,” Pimpan Diskul Na Ayudhaya, director of Doi Tung Development Project's Knowledge and Learning Centre, once told *The Sunday Nation*.

“The walkie-talkie was for communicating with officials to ensure quick solutions were delivered. And, as for the pencils, Dr Sumet Tantivejkul, secretary general of the Chaipattana Foundation, said His Majesty requested 12 pencils every year – one for each month. He used each one up completely. No one dared to throw away any of his pencils.”





Mourners sing the Royal Anthem in front of the Grand Palace, where the body of HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej rests.

NATION/ANANT CHANTARASOOT



Buses and other forms of public transport were packed with commuters travelling to Sanam Luang to join the mass singing of the Royal Anthem yesterday.

NATION/RACHANON INTHARAGSA



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, left, and Princess Ubolratana Rajakanya hug at the royal religious praying rite as part of the late King Bhumibol's funeral ceremony.



Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen bows to a photo of the late HM King Bhumibol at the Grand Palace yesterday. He was joined by members of his government who also came to pay homage to Thailand's long-serving monarch.

COURTESY OF GRAND PALACE THAILAND



A crowd heads out from Sanam Luang after the mass singing event yesterday afternoon.

NATION/TASSAFON VONGKITTIPONG

# THAIS UNITED IN ONE VOICE



Sanam Luang was close to capacity yesterday when around 150,000 people gathered to sing the Royal Anthem in memory of the late King Bhumibol.

NATION/TASSAFON VONGKITTIPONG



Despite rain early yesterday, mourners did not hesitate to join the mass singing of the Royal Anthem at Sanam Luang in tribute to the late King Bhumibol.

NATION/ANANT CHANTARASOOT



World-renowned composer and conductor Somtow Sucharitkul conducted a 100-piece orchestra and a professional choir of 100 singers that lead the mass singing of the Royal Anthem by an estimated 150,000 people at Sanam Luang yesterday.

NATION/ANANT CHANTARASOOT



A woman faints while taking part in the mass Royal Anthem singing at Sanam Luang. She was assisted by a young actor Arthit Tangviboonpanich.

NATION/TASSAFON VONGKITTIPONG



Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak signs a condolence book for the King at the Grand Palace yesterday. He is accompanied by his wife Rosmah Mansor.

COURTESY OF GRAND PALACE THAILAND



Many commuters travel to Sanam Luang by cheap and fast express boats on the Chao Phraya River to attend the singing event.

NATION/CHALINEE THIRASUPA