



The TDRI 1996 Year-end Conference

Reforming the Public Sector for the Future of Thailand

In celebration of the Golden Jubilee of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great's accession to the throne, many activities have been held looking back over Thailand's development over the past half century. It is clear that Thailand has made substantial progress during that period. The private sector, in particular, has been successful in coping with the rapidly changing environment, thus leading the country's economic prosperity during the past decade.

In 1996, the Thai economy experienced major setbacks, with exports almost stagnant, low economic growth, and high current account deficit. This is a sore reminder that, while the country has been successful in the past, there is no guarantee that success will be automatically forthcoming in the future. Advances in information technology, coupled with financial and trade liberalization will link the world ever closer together, resulting in an even more competitive world economy. While the private sector has adapted itself to the new environment, the public sector has barely adjusted to new roles and responsibilities. It is feared that if the public sector is not appropriately reformed in time, the once pillar of national development would ironically become a major bottleneck of development progress in the future.

In November 1995, the Office of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) received financial support from the Thailand Research Fund to carry out a two-year project on "Reforming the Public Sector for the Era of Globalization." Two teams were assigned to carry out the project. The first team is led by Dr. Pratyva Vesarach, School of Political Science, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, and the second team is the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI).

The 1996 Year-end Conference, entitled "Reforming the Public Sector for the Future of Thailand," was jointly organized by the Chai Pattana Foundation and TDRI to present the results of the project after the first year of research. Papers presented at the Conference include "The Thai Public Sector and the Country's Future Development" by TDRI President Chalongsob Sussangkarn and Apichai Puntasen of Thammasat University's Faculty of Economics, "Stabilization Policy Administration in the Future: A Suggested Reform" by Rangsun Thanapornpan of Thammasat University's Faculty of Economics, "Results-Oriented Budgeting" by Chulalongkorn University's Institute of Social Research Director Kraiyudht Dhiratayakinant, "The Public Sector and New Partnerships in Development" by TDRI's Research Director for Social Development Participation Orapin Sopchokchai, and "Public Sector Reform for the Future: Strategy for Development" by Pratyva Vesarach. The Conference also featured a key-note speech by H.E. Mr. Anand Panyarachun, chairman of the TDRI Council of Trustees and the Board of Directors.

Held at the Ambassador Jomtien, Chon Buri from December 13-15, 1996, the event was attended by 429 participants ([Table 1](#)). Organizers of the Conference are deeply honored by the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, who graciously attended the Conference, and presided over the closing ceremony.

In the closing address, Her Royal Highness said:

"It is my pleasure to attend the Year-end Conference on "Reforming the Public Sector for the Future of Thailand." I admire the organizers of the Conference and those supporting the event for recognizing the importance of public sector reform and having selected it as the topic of this year's seminar.

The Conference is a good sign for national development toward the future. Progress of national development greatly depends on efficiency of the public sector. The public sector is in fact a major mechanism which will mobilize national development, whether concerning the economy, society, politics, national security, or the well-being of the population.

Public sector reform for higher efficiency and capability in national development is difficult and time-consuming. To achieve the desired goals and to carry out the task smoothly, determination, cooperation, support and sacrifice are required from all parties involved for the ultimate benefit to all."