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SINGAPORE



**SINGAPORE**  
New President  
Tharman S.  
Elected

**SUPPLEMENT**  
Thailand  
National Day

**INTERVIEW**  
H.E. Chutintorn Gongsakdi  
Ambassador of Thailand to  
Singapore



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# SINGAPORE ELECTS NEW PRESIDENT THARMAN SHANMUGRATNAM



President  
Swearing-in  
Ceremony at the Istana  
on 14th September 2023  
(Source: [www.pmo.gov.sg](http://www.pmo.gov.sg))

MORE than 70% of Singaporeans voted for Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam as their ninth President. He won over two rival candidates to be the first non-Chinese candidate to be directly voted to the presidency. At the Swearing-in Ceremony held at the Istana on 14th September 2023, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong congratulated the new President and said: "The strong vote you garnered shows the regard and support voters had for you and your message of unity - Respect for All." The 66-year old President started out as an economist in the Monetary Authority of Singapore to rise up the ranks to become its Managing Director, and later, as a Minister became its Chairman. He has held several ministerial portfolios that included Education and Finance before becoming the Deputy Prime Minister, Coordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies and most recently, Senior Minister.



Then President-Elect  
Tharman Shanmugaratnam  
at the outgoing President  
Halimah Yacob's Farewell  
Ceremony on 13th  
September 2023  
(Source: *Tharman S. FB*)

## S. JAISHANKAR: INDIA'S G20 A TRULY PEOPLE'S G20

INDIA completed its Presidency of the G20 at the Summit in New Delhi that took place from 9th to 10th September 2023 on the theme "One Earth, One Family and One Future".

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi had welcomed more than 30,000 delegates from 125 countries who included Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. PM Lee spoke at two "One Future" sessions in New Delhi that dealt with subjects on new technologies specifically hydrogen as well as carbon capture. He also spoke on new financing models to source investment funds for combating climate change that included exploring a "blended" finance platform that involves the public, private and philanthropic sectors.

The Summit represented the culmination of all the work done this past year and resulted in several substantial outcomes that demonstrated India's convening power and acceptance of its ideas on the global stage. In a NewsX report India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said "Our G20 presidency is



special...it is different. We succeeded in taking the G20 out of the capital city and its convention centres and made it a mass movement. It was truly a people's G20, and Jan Bhagidari (public participation) was the central feature of our presidency." One major achievement of the Summit was the acceptance of the African Union as one of the permanent members of the G20 Group.

VISITS

# FACETIME IN SEPTEMBER 2023



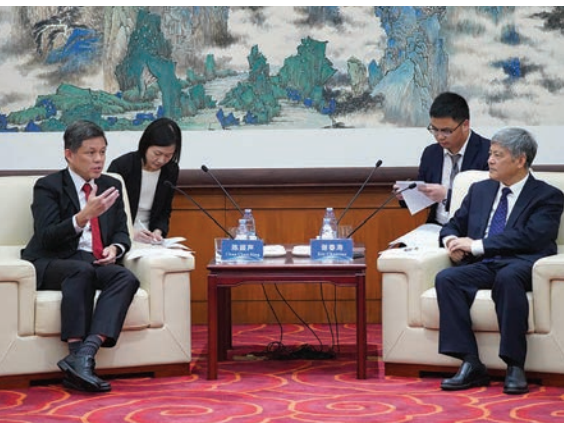
Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau was on a working visit to Singapore from 7th to 8th September 2023 and met Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the Istana. They discussed international developments and PM Lee congratulated Prime Minister Trudeau on the recent upgrading of ASEAN-Canada relations to a Strategic Partnership.



Prime Ministers Lee Hsien Loong and Rishi Sunak of Britain met on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in New Delhi where they issued a Joint Declaration to elevate Singapore-United Kingdom relations to a Strategic Partnership which includes Economic Cooperation; Defence, Security, Intelligence and Foreign Policy Cooperation; Climate, Sustainability, Green Economy and Energy Cooperation.



Malaysia's Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim visited Singapore on 13th September 2023. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong hosted PM Anwar and his wife, Dato' Seri Dr Wan Azizah Dr Wan Ismail, to tea. PM Anwar spoke at the Milken Institute Asia Summit 2023 and was accompanied by Minister of Investment, Trade and Industry Tengku Datuk Seri Utama Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dato' Seri Diraja Dr Zambry Abd Kadir.



Singapore's Minister for Education and Minister-in-charge of the Public Service Chan Chun Sing visited China from 10th to 13th September 2023 where he met Executive Vice President Xie Chuntao and co-chaired the 9th Singapore-China Forum on Leadership with China's Minister Li Ganjie in Beijing. An MOU on carbon credits collaboration was also signed showcasing both countries' commitment to addressing climate change.



Singapore Foreign Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan's National Statement at the 78th U.N. General Assembly on 18th Sept 2023 called on members to accept and respect diversity in views in a multilateral system and urgently asked for an inclusive global dialogue on AI.



The Royal Embassy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia held its 93rd Independence Day celebrations on 21st September 2023 at the Shangri-La Hotel's stately Island Ballroom with the Kingdom's Ambassador to Singapore H.E. Abdullah Mohammed A. Almadhi welcoming guests including the Singapore Government's representative to the event, Senior Minister of State Ministry of Defence and Ministry of Manpower, Mr Zaqy Mohamad.



The Embassy of El Salvador in Singapore celebrated the country's 202nd Independence Anniversary at Sofitel Singapore Sentosa Resort & Spa on 22nd September 2023. El Salvador's Ambassador H.E. Alfonso Valencia successfully hosted the festivities with the Guest of Honour representing the Singapore Government, Ms Rahayu Mahzum, Senior Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Health & Ministry of Law.



Singapore's Senior Minister of State at the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Development Ms Sim Ann was the Guest of Honour and Speaker at the South Africa-Singapore Women's Roundtable on 26th September 2023 with Ms Pinky Kekana, South African Deputy Minister in the Presidency for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. The Roundtable is one of the South African High Commission's South Africa Focus Week events.



The Saudi Ministry of Commerce, National Competitiveness Center, Saudi General Authority of Foreign Trade, and Singapore Business Federation (SBF) organised the Saudi-Singapore Business Forum at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel on 26th September 2023 to discuss opportunities in furthering bilateral trade.

EVENTS



Country Supplement

## Reflections

# H.E. Chutintorn Gongsakdi on Bilateral Ties and the Diplomatic Life

*The Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Singapore, H.E. Chutintorn Gongsakdi, in a conversation with Editor-in-Chief Nomita Dhar sheds light on his distinguished career as a diplomat and the thriving bilateral relations between Thailand and Singapore*

**As a seasoned diplomat, could you share some insights into the challenges and rewards of your work in strengthening Thailand's diplomatic ties with other nations, and what have you learned from your experiences?**

Diplomacy is both challenging and rewarding. It requires patience, negotiation skills and adaptability. The reward lies in building bridges between nations and fostering cooperation. From my experiences, I've learned the importance of dialogue, understanding different cultures and the potential for diplomacy to bring positive change to the world. It's been a lifelong journey of growth and learning.

**The Royal Thai Embassy is located in the heart of Singapore. Could you share more about the origins of the embassy?**

Yes indeed, the location of our Embassy is very central and it does belong to us. Originally it was called "Hurricane House". In the location of the 1890s it was bought by Siamese King Rama V (1868 - 1910), HRH used it as his residence during his visits to Singapore. HRH bought it in 1897.

In 2013 it was rebuilt to what you see today and now we have four new blocks which are - Pavilion, Embassy building, visa section and the Ambassador's residence where we welcome guests often and engage them with Thai hospitality and culture.

**Ambassador you presented your credentials in 2022, what was your takeaway and learning?**

Singapore's approach to planning and its vision for the future are commendable. It influences our bilateral relations positively



as we collaborate in various sectors. Singapore's strategic planning aligns with our mutual goals, particularly in economic cooperation and regional development, making our partnership even stronger.

**An important aspect of Thailand-Singapore partnership is your collaboration in the defence sector?**

Yes, there are regular high-level visits, cross-attendance of courses, and professional exchanges that have fostered mutual understanding and close friendships among personnel from both Armed Forces. During my term, prestigious military awards were conferred to Thailand's military leaders.

**How has your Embassy been engaging with Singaporeans?**

We have been holding events like the Thai Festival 2022, Orchid Extravaganza 2023 and Mid-Autumn Festival, which serve as vibrant showcases of Thai culture in Singapore. These events are cultural bridges that connect our nations. They celebrate the diversity and beauty of Thai culture

while fostering understanding and friendship. Through collaborations with Gardens by the Bay, we highlight shared cultural heritage and the importance of preserving it. The recognition of Kebaya as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage nomination exemplifies our commitment to this shared heritage.

**Please tell us more about Thailand's promotion of sustainable tourism, including initiatives like the "Drive of the Year 2023"**

Sustainable tourism is vital in preserving Thailand's natural splendour. Collaborative initiatives like the "Drive of the Year 2023" demonstrate our commitment to sustainable practices.

## *Bilateral Ties*

# Celebrating a Decade of Strengthened Military Bonds

*Since 1965, Thailand and Singapore have cultivated a remarkable partnership, marked by a decade of steadfast military collaboration. Recently, this enduring alliance was underscored with four prestigious military awards bestowed upon distinguished Thai military leaders, highlighting the significance of their bilateral defense ties*



On July 6, 2023, General Chalermphon Srisawasdi, Chief of Defence Forces of the Royal Thai Armed Forces, received Singapore’s highest military honour, the Darjah Utama Bakti Cemerlang (Tentera) (Distinguished Service Order - Military), in recognition of his exceptional contributions. General Chalermphon’s leadership has solidified ties between the armed forces, evident in joint exercises like Exercise Kocha Singa, Cope Tiger, and Singsiam, showcasing their commitment to mutual growth.

### **Navy: Charting New Waters**

On August 16, 2023, Admiral Cherngchai Chomchergnat, Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Thai Navy (RTN), was awarded the Pingat Jasa Gemilang (Tentera) (Meritorious Service Medal - Military) for significant contributions. Under ADM Cherngchai’s guidance, interactions such as Navy-to-Navy Staff Talks, professional exchanges, port calls, and course attendance have

deepened mutual trust and professionalism between the navies.

### **Army: Bridging Armies, Building Friendships**

On February 9, 2023, General Narongpan Jittkaewtae, Chief of Army, Royal Thai Army (RTA), received Singapore’s prestigious military award, the Pingat Jasa Gemilang (Tentera) (Meritorious Service Medal - Military), for outstanding contributions.



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## *Thai GE in Singapore*

# Thai Community Spirit Shines Bright

*Thailand’s political landscape took an intriguing turn a few months after the May General Election, with Mr. Srettha Thavisin being sworn in on 5th September 2023 as the 30th Prime Minister of Thailand alongside his cabinet. Later, on 11th September, PM Thavisin delivered his Policy Statement to the National Assembly underpinning policy priorities for Thailand’s next chapter, including broadened rights and equality, advancement of digital economy, and commitment to sustainable development*

IN the realm of politics and diplomacy alike, the integrity of the process is as essential as the outcomes themselves. Earlier this year, the Royal Thai Embassy in Singapore organised the 2023 General Election (GE) for Thai nationals registered for overseas voting. Following extensive preparations and close coordination with Thailand’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and the Office of the Election Commission, the Embassy conducted overseas voting in Singapore on the weekend of April 29-30, 2023, on its grounds on Orchard Road.

Singapore is the second home to 22,000 Thai nationals, ranking among the top 10 countries for Thai expatriates. This diverse Thai community in Singapore comprises a vibrant mix of individuals, including Thai laborers in the construction and manufacturing sectors, professionals employed by multinational corporations (MNCs) or international tech startups, students, and



those who have relocated to Singapore to be with their families. Approximately 4,000 individuals registered online for overseas voting in Singapore, representing various provinces and constituencies.

When the designated voting days arrived, it was encouraging to witness a remarkable turnout of 86.36% among registered voters, one of the highest turnout rates for the 2023 GE around the world. These two days provided an exceptional opportunity for Embassy officials to engage with the Thai diaspora, who voiced their approval of the seamless and orderly voting procedures and commended the excellent service provided by on-site staff. Despite the relatively small number of Thai officials, approximately 30 in total, representing all facets of the Embassy and Thai government offices in Singapore, known as “Team Thailand”, the Embassy received valuable support from volunteers within the Thai community, the Labor Volunteers group, and former Embassy staff members. These dedicated individuals generously devoted their time from early morning to late evening to support the election process. This also served as a testament to Thai identity and the unifying spirit of the Thai community in Singapore. These remarkable individuals extended their support in various ways, their grace and warmth shining through. Experiencing this sense of unity, particularly while residing far from their homeland, was profoundly heartwarming.

# Thai Sports & Culture

## Enjoying the Thai Experience in Singapore!



In a grand showcase of Thai soft power, the “Thailand Week 2023: Amazing Thailand...Craft your Journey” event series has emerged as a beacon of cultural brilliance, fashion innovation, and Muay Thai excellence, through the combined efforts of the Royal Thai Embassy, the Department of International Trade Promotion (DITP), and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

### Unveiling Thailand’s Cultural Kaleidoscope

Thailand Week 2023 kicked off with a splendid display of culture and fashion. Held at Suntec City, Towers 3&4 from 24th to 27th August 2023, the opening ceremony was a visual feast, featuring a Thai contemporary dance and a fashion show led by honorary models, including M.L. Piyawan Gongsakdi, spouse of the Thai Ambassador to Singapore, H.E. Mr. Chutintorn Gongsakdi. This fusion of artistry and style showcased Thailand’s ability to blend tradition with modernity seamlessly.



### Exploring Thai Businesses and Products

“Thailand Week 2023” opened its doors at Suntec City, Towers 1 & 2 Atrium, offering a dynamic platform for the people of Singapore to explore Thai businesses and products. Featuring 60 booths, “Thailand Week 2023” showcased a diverse array of products, from mouthwatering Thai cuisine to exquisite jewelry, fashion, and home decor. “Amazing Thailand...Craft your Journey” is more than just a cultural spectacle; it is an invitation to embark on a personalized journey through Thailand’s attractions and experiences.



### Muay Thai Heritage: A Display of Strength and Tradition

On August 26, 2023, the “WBC Muaythai Singapore Festival 2” took centre stage at Suntec City, a celebration of not only the physical prowess of athletes but also the rich heritage of Muay Thai. This event, organized by the World Boxing Council (WBC) Muaythai Singapore and Eminent Fighting Championship (EFC), in collaboration with the Royal Thai Embassy, was a testament to the enduring spirit of Thailand’s national sport.



# Thai Culture

## Gardens by the Bay Orchid Extravaganza and Mid-Autumn Festival

*In a harmonious fusion of nature and culture, the Royal Thai Embassy teamed up with Gardens by the Bay to present two enchanting events in the fall of 2023: the “Orchid Extravaganza 2023: Orchids of the East Tropics” and the “Mid-Autumn Festival 2023”. These events served as vibrant testaments to the rich tapestry of Thai culture and its enduring beauty.*



### Orchid Extravaganza 2023: Orchids of the East Tropics

On August 19, 2023, H.E. Mr. Chutintorn Gongsakdi, the Ambassador of Thailand to Singapore, graced the Orchid Extravaganza 2023 at the Flower Dome, Gardens by the Bay. This remarkable exhibition transported visitors to the lush East Tropics, showcasing an astonishing array of orchids that were as diverse as the cultures they represented.

The Orchid Extravaganza 2023, which ran from July 28 to September 17, was a collaborative effort involving not only the Royal Thai Embassy but also the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, the High Commission of Brunei Darussalam, and the High Commission of Malaysia. This collective endeavor brought to life a showcase of orchids cultivated from species native to their respective countries or shared within the region. It was a living testament to the shared cultural heritage and historical legacy that united these five nations.

One of the key highlights of the Orchid Extravaganza 2023 was the display of Kebaya, a traditional outfit that had been jointly nominated for recognition in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list by Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore. This nomination underscored the importance of preserving and celebrating the shared cultural heritage that bound these nations together.

### Mid-Autumn Festival 2023

With the approaching of fall, the Mid-Autumn Festival 2023 promised to be a magical celebration at Gardens by the Bay. The festival featured a special showcase of Lanna lanterns from northern Thailand, adding an enchanting and authentic touch to the festivities.

The Royal Thai Embassy, in collaboration with Gardens by the Bay, displayed the Traditional Lanna Lanterns, which were exquisite examples of the exceptional craftsmanship of the Lanna people, serving as captivating reminders of the profound depth of Lanna culture and the joyous celebrations that exemplified its essence.

Additionally, the Thailand Lantern Dance, known as “Loy Krathong” or “Yi Peng,” was showcased at the festival’s opening ceremony on 15 September 2023. This cultural event was traditionally held in Thailand on the full moon night of November. Participants released intricately designed lanterns into the night sky, symbolizing the release of negativity and the embrace of positive aspirations.



## Natural Attractions

# Nurturing Thailand’s Natural Splendor: Driving Home Sustainability and Friendship



Thailand, the jewel of Southeast Asia, beckoned travelers with its rich tapestry of culture, delectable cuisine, and breathtaking landscapes. In recent years, there had been a significant shift towards embracing sustainable tourism that championed the preservation of Thailand’s exquisite natural beauty. The Royal Thai Embassy in Singapore and the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) took the lead in promoting this eco-friendly approach. The recent collaboration with the Porsche Club Singapore in the “Drive of the Year 2023” journey was a shining example of the initiative



An undeniable draw of Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park was its underwater world. Snorkeling and kayaking adventures allowed visitors to connect with the kaleidoscope of life beneath the waves, featuring vibrant coral reefs and exotic marine species. For the more adventurous souls, diving in this national park was a must, with the prime time spanning from February to October, and March and April offering the best visibility.

### The Grand Expedition from Singapore to Thailand

The event had kicked off on July 8, 2023, at the Royal Thai Embassy in Singapore, with H.E. Mr. Chutintorn Gongsakdi, Ambassador of Thailand to Singapore, extending his warmest wishes to the participants. This grand expedition, featuring a convoy of 28 high-performance cars and 52 enthusiastic passengers, wove its way through the heart of Southeast Asia, from Singapore through Malaysia, and finally into the mesmerizing landscapes of Thailand. Beyond showcasing Thailand’s captivating beauty, this initiative symbolized the enduring bond between Thailand and Singapore while highlighting the enormous potential for sustainable tourism growth through collaboration.

### Exploring Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park

Mu Ko Ang Thong National Park was an enchanting archipelago nestled in the Gulf of Thailand, just 20 kilometers west of Koh Samui. The name, meaning “Golden Bowl,” perfectly captured the essence of this untouched paradise that spanned approximately 102 square kilometers, celebrated for its unspoiled charm, crystalline waters, and thriving marine ecosystems.

Tourists eager to immerse themselves in this natural wonderland could partake in day trips departing from either Koh Samui or Koh Pha-Ngan in Surat Thani Province. These excursions offered a glimpse into the ethereal beauty of islands like Koh Wua Ta Lab, famed for its pristine sandy beaches and awe-inspiring panoramic vistas of the national park, and Koh Mae Ko, where a mystical emerald lake awaited exploration, reminiscent of a fairy tale setting.



# Investment Opportunities

## The EEC: A Gateway to Prosperity

In an ambitious bid to transform Thailand's landscape into a hub of high-tech industries, innovation, logistics and a regional trade and investment gateway, the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC) stands as a shining testament to the nation's commitment to progress and economic revitalization. Emerging at the heart of the Thailand 4.0 development strategy, the EEC is rapidly gaining recognition for its transformative potential across the Greater Mekong Sub-region.

### Paving the Way for Thailand 4.0

The EEC, spanning the major provinces to the east of Bangkok, embodies the vision of Thailand 4.0 – an innovative blueprint aimed at restructuring and reinvigorating the nation's economy. The EEC's strategic location, coupled with its comprehensive development plan, positions it as a key driver of economic integration and growth in the region.

### A Resounding Success

The initial phase of the EEC Investment Target (2018-2022) is a resounding success, demonstrating Thailand's commitment to turning vision into reality. With approximately USD 19 billion invested in four Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Infrastructure Projects, the groundwork for transfor-



the "S-Curve" industries, Thailand aims to harness the potential of Next-generation Automotive, Intelligent Electronics, High-value and Medical Tourism, Advanced Agriculture and Biotechnology, along with Food for the Future. Furthermore, the EEC is expanding its horizons with the addition of seven new S-Curve industries, comprising of Automation and Robotics, Medical and Comprehensive Healthcare, Aviation and Logistics, Biofuels and Biochemicals, Education and Human Resource Development, Defense Industry, and Digital. This forward-thinking approach not only ensures that Thailand remains at the forefront of innovation, but also creates a myriad of investment opportunities for both domestic and international investors.



mation has been laid. A game-changing development is the High-Speed Rail linking three airports (Don Muang, Suvarnabhumi and U-Tapao), set to connect Bangkok with the EEC area. This ambitious project, expected to be operational by 2026, promises travel times of less than 60 minutes between Bangkok and the EEC. It will link five provinces (Bangkok, Samutprakarn, Chachoengsao, Chonburi and Rayong) and three major international airports of Bangkok, with nine high-speed train stations facilitating seamless travel and trade.

One of the crown jewels of the EEC is the U-Tapao International Airport located in Rayong Province (artist illustration pictured above right). It is positioned as the third international airport of Thailand and is anticipated to commence operations in 2025. This cutting-edge facility boasts a capacity of 60 million passengers per annum and serves as a vital gateway to the EEC's growing economic landscape.

### A Glimpse into the Future

As Phase 1 concludes, Thailand is setting its sights on Phase 2 of the EEC Investment Target (2022-2026). With a focus on

### EEC Prime Investment Destination

The EEC is more than just a development project; it is a testament to Thailand's unwavering commitment to progress and prosperity. Investors looking to participate in the growth story of Southeast Asia should undoubtedly consider the EEC as a prime destination for their investments.

As Thailand charts its course towards a brighter economic future, the EEC stands as a beacon of opportunity. With Phase 1's success and Phase 2's ambitious vision, the EEC is poised to play a pivotal role in reshaping the economic landscape of the Greater Mekong Subregion and beyond.



## Education

# Penny Chong: Guides the Way for Inclusiveness in Learning



*In the world of education, there are teachers, and then there are educators who transcend the traditional boundaries of teaching, inspiring us with their unwavering commitment to their students' success. One such remarkable educator is Chong Chew Luan Penny or "Penny Chong", whose dedication to inclusive education has earned her the prestigious Princess Maha Chakri Award in 2023. Her journey is a testament to the power of education, compassion, and innovation.*

### A Life Devoted to Education

Penny's journey in education began with a Bachelor's degree in Arts with Honors from the National University of Singapore, followed by a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Secondary) from Nanyang Technological University. Her professional life took shape as an English and Humanities teacher at Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary School in Singapore. What sets her apart is her dedication to visually impaired students - a journey that spans an awe-inspiring 15 years.

"Whenever I see my visually impaired students actually achieve what they want to do, that is something that I am very proud of." Penny Chong reveals her inspiration. Her support has allowed visually impaired students to not only participate in mainstream education but excel in subjects they are passionate about.

### Innovating for Inclusion:

The Princess Maha Chakri Award Foundation places strong emphasis on sustainable and innovative education prac-

tices, and Penny has truly embraced this philosophy. She spearheaded an ICT (Information and Communication Technology) initiative aimed at empowering visually impaired students. This initiative allowed them to access learning materials in digital formats and receive immediate feedback from their teachers. The result was increased independence in their learning journey. However, like any endeavor, this project had its challenges.



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Best Wishes for  
*Thailand*  
National Day



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Gold Medal 2023



Monde Selection:  
Gold Medal 2023



World Beer Awards:  
Thailand Country Winner 2023



World Beer Awards:  
Thailand Gold Medal 2023