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OBITUARY

NATIONAL ARTIST ANGKARN SAID HE 'BREATHED POEMS'

THE NATION

With the power of beautiful words comes great responsibility. That was the life motto of Angkarn Kalayanapong, a renowned poet and National Artist, who passed away yesterday at 86 after long battles against heart disease and diabetes.

"I breathe poems," Angkarn said during one of his last interviews this year. "I do believe that poems can change society for the better. Only people like me are never mistaken that we can do it alone."

The poet and painter was recognised as one of the greatest of his era. Born in the southern province of Nakhon Si Thammarat on February 13, 1926, Angkarn graduated from the Faculty of Painting, Sculpture and Graphic Arts at Silpakorn University under Professor Silp Bhirasri, the father of Thai modern art.



ANGKARN

He was named a National Artist in 1989 (Literature) and won the SEA Write Award for "Panithan Kawee" (The Poet's Pledge) in 1986.

He began writing in the late 1950s and was initially criticised for transgressing poetic convention and using unorthodox language. Some of his last pieces of work were politically inspired, reflecting the problems in the deeply divided Thailand. The People's Alliance for Democracy received his contributions during the anti-Thaksin campaign.

One of his last poems lashed out at the Yingluck government's plan to let the United States use the U-tapao airbase.

Angkarn was also famous as a painter. He created many highly rated drawings and paintings through his career, including "Prints of Himmaphan". In 1989, Angkarn was finally honoured as a National Artist.

The artist survived by a son and two daughters. His funeral ceremony will be held at Wat Tritosathep at 7pm daily until August 31.

DRESS REHEARSAL



BARAMEE 'DENJAN' PHANICH, 23, one of five transvestite students Thammasat University has allowed to attend their graduation ceremony in female attire, poses with his mother during a rehearsal at the Tha Prachan campus yesterday. This is the first time the university has openly allowed transgender students to wear female attire to the graduation ceremony, which will be held on Thursday.

THAILAND MUST WOO CHINA FDI: BANTHOON

Kingdom must be wary of competition from other Asean countries, says KBank chief

THE NATION

Thailand will have to adapt to gain more from an influx of China's foreign direct investment (FDI) into Asean countries as China is now the world's second-largest economy with a 10.5-per-cent share of global GDP.

Banthoon Lamsam, president and CEO of Kasikornbank, told a seminar yesterday that Thailand must not be complacent as there are many other competitors for China's FDI within Asean.

Speaking at the seminar on the role of the baht and the Chinese yuan held by National Research Council, he said the Chinese currency now has the potential to be a major currency of the global economy due to China's huge international reserves of as much as US\$3 trillion (Bt90 trillion).

Over the past 11 years, China has grown rapidly from \$1.2 trillion or 3.7 per cent of global GDP in 2000 to \$7.3 trillion or 10.5 per cent of global GDP in 2011.

By comparison, the US's share of global GDP fell from 30.8 per cent in 2000 to only 21.7 per cent in 2011. During the same period, Japan's share of global GDP also dropped from 14.7 per cent to 8.4 per cent.

As a result, China is now the world's second-largest economy, which continues to grow rapidly.

Banthoon said bilateral trade between China and Thailand has also expanded accordingly during the period, while China's trade with Asean was up from 4 per cent of the grouping's total to 11 per cent in 2011.

China is now the No 1 trading partner of Asean, followed by the US, Japan and Europe.

Banthoon said Thailand should also be aware that there are competitors for China's trade and FDI in Asean. For example, Chinese investors have looked at Cambodia, Vietnam as well as Myanmar as places for new investment after the minimum wages in Thailand were significantly raised recently.

Overall, China's FDI in Asean rose from \$119 million in 2000 to \$4.38 billion in 2011, accounting for 12.2 per cent of the total FDI in Asean countries.

For Thailand, FDI from China rose from \$57 million in 2000 to about \$700 million 2011. Over the past two years, Kasikornbank, for example, has had to adjust to accommodate more FDI from China.

The inflow is forecast to rise markedly over the next 5-10 years so the country will have to get ready to benefit from this trend.

Opportunities will lie in the fact that China will need to source more raw materials for factories while its domestic consumption will likely expand rapidly in coming years because it is currently only 35 per cent of China's GDP.

China's share of global GDP is forecast to rise from the present 10.5 per cent to around 22 per cent in 2025 so there will be tremendous opportunities for other countries to tap in terms of China's domestic consumption.

China also has relatively low public debt as a percentage of GDP - currently only 43.5 per cent - while its international reserves exceed \$3 trillion. This makes its currency, the yuan, as the new potential reserve currency for other countries as China's role in the global economy continues to expand.

However, the yuan still has some limitations as a new currency for international trade, so it accounted for only 0.04 per cent of Thailand's international trade in 2010 and 0.25 per cent in 2011.

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

BHOKIN BACKS REWRITING 'POISONOUS FRUIT' CONSTITUTION

PRAPHAN JINDALERTUDOMDEE, SOMRUDITAI SAPSOMBOON THE NATION

Bhokin Bhalakula, the chairman of a special panel studying charter amendments, believes the government should go ahead and remove the "poisonous-fruit" Constitution although it may be a painful task.

The 2007 Constitution is regarded by the ruling coalition leader Pheu Thai as a fruit from a poisonous tree, which is definitely poisonous and needs to be got rid of. However, their opponents see the Pheu Thai stance on the charter as aimed at serving a vested interest. As a result, the proposed amendments have led to severe conflicts in the society.

Bhokin, a former Parliament president and House speaker, says the coalition would have to be patient in the manoeuvring for the rewriting of the charter so that the country could exit the "black hole" political situation.

"I admire the prime minister a lot. She is patient and not aggressive. She has declined to retaliate against the opponents. I think it's right that we must stop the quarrelling first," Bhokin, a legal expert of the Pheu Thai, said in an interview with *The Nation*.

Now, Bhokin chairs the coalition panel studying measures on how to amend the Constitution. He is one of the legal experts and brains whose

services have been used by former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Bhokin said no timeframe should be set for the study by his panel as it could encounter a lot of problems.

He said his panel would speed up the study and do its best and the decision would depend on the coalition. He insisted that his panel would not make a decision for the coalition partners but would only recommend the best way out and would try to explain to opponents of the move about the need to amend the charter.

"After the government receives the proposals, if it regards the situation as not conducive for the amendments due to the prevailing misunderstanding and risk of more problems, the government may wait for the sake of appropriateness. In that case, no one would complain. But if the government goes ahead and the people reject it [in a public referendum], there could be problems," Bhokin said.

"We have gone astray very far from the right path during the past six to seven years. We don't know what are real principles and what is right or wrong. Now, we must start anew without hatred or prejudice. Now, the problems are not related to Thaksin or Sondhi [Limthongkul, a yellow-shirt leader]. But the current problem is that the society has been trapped in a black hole. Anger and emotions are

enlarging the black hole every day. We must stop and step back. We must not be emotional when discussing the issue. We will have to cross this black hole.

"I think the government has done the right thing. Although the government was on the right side, it did not stubbornly push for the amendments. It would take more time and the government would be at a disadvantage because there are a lot of coup legacies that could destroy the government. No government in the past had to face so much difficulty in solving the people's problems. It is difficult for the government to solve the problems and it has to be careful at the same time. When people are emotional, we can't retaliate in kind. Although we may feel hurt and feel that we failed to convince the other side, we have to be patient and try harder.

"In my opinion, although the government is hurt, it must tolerate the pain. This is the only solution. After we survive this issue, the black hole will be much shallower. We cannot cross the black hole right away but we will have to make it shallower until it is gone. I can't say how long it will take to reach that goal," Bhokin said.

Bhokin said the charter amendment bill, which is pending the third reading, will have to be deliberated in the final reading. He said MPs and

senators would have to vote to approve or reject it depending on the current opinions of the majority of society.

Among other things, Bhokin hinted charter amendments might be made to turn the Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Holders of Political Office to a two-court system instead of a one-court system.

He said the Thai political court system was modelled after the system in France, which contradicted the human rights principle because it used only one court.

"In France, they use the court in traitor cases but we are using the system for all cases," Bhokin said.

"Actually, this system runs against the Constitution but no one understands this. By the human rights system, there must be two courts as everybody should have the right to appeal against court rulings without deadline." The Supreme Court's Criminal Division for Holders of Political Office was set up under the 2007 charter. It sentenced Thaksin to two years in jail in the case over the purchase of a Ratchadaphisek land plot.

Bhokin said Thaksin had done nothing wrong in the Ratchadaphisek land case.

Bhokin says independent organisations should exist in the new charter but the role of judges to appoint members of the independent organisations should be restricted. He said the court's image would be damaged if it involved itself in politics too much.



BHOKIN