



174 students receive honors on AIT's 124th Graduation

One-hundred and seventy-four students from 11 countries in Asia and Europe received their degrees on the occasion of the 124th Graduation of the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) held on 16 December 2015. The students, which included 22 doctoral graduates, join the 21,000-plus alumni body spread across all continents.

The AIT graduating batch included 80 students from

Vietnam, 33 from Myanmar and 28 from Thailand. Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Lao-PDR, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Switzerland were the countries of origin of other students. Graduating students received scholarships from 43 sources including five international organizations and foundations, five governments, seven universities and colleges, 22 business and corporate entities, and four other donors.



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Thai Pipe announces 9 mill Baht Scholarships for AIT



Dr. Yanyong Phataralaoha (file photo).

Christmas Eve brought good cheer to AIT as it received a generous donation of nine million Thai Baht as scholarships. AIT alumnus Dr. Yanyong Phataralaoha communicated to the AIT President the decision to donate a total of 9 million Baht (8.5 million

from Thai Pipe Group of Companies and 0.5 million as his personal contribution) towards the Thai Pipe Fund.

This donation of 9 million is in addition to the existing tranche of Thai Pipe Scholarships. Three students (two from Cambodia and one from Myanmar) have already received the Thai Pipe scholarships for August 2015 intake, and three students (two from Vietnam and one from Myanmar) are set to receive the scholarship for the January 2016 intake.

German Ambassador hands over DAAD scholarship certificates



German Ambassador H.E. Mr. Peter Prügel with DAAD scholarship recipients at the German Embassy in Bangkok.

German Ambassador H.E. Mr. Peter Prügel handed over scholarship certificates to DAAD awardees on 3 December 2015 to students from AIT and the Seameo Tropmed Network. Ambassador Prügel stated that academic cooperation between Germany and Thailand had developed significantly and official

university collaboration between the two countries reached a record 186 instances with exchanges on all academic levels and fields. Scholarship recipients came from Cambodia, Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam. AIT's Vice President Prof. Kazuo Yamamoto expressed his gratitude to the Ambassador and to DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) for supporting AIT students.

AIT signs MoU with Irrigation Department of Pakistan's Sindh Province



MoU signing in the presence of Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah (standing, center).

AIT has signed a five-year agreement with the Irrigation Department, Government of Sindh, Pakistan for delivering postgraduate programs, short courses, training and building capacity of professionals.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Mr. Syed Zaheer Hyder Shah, Secretary, Irrigation Department, Government of Sindh, and Dr. Jonathan Shaw, Executive Director, AIT Extension, at a function organized at the Chief Minister's Secretariat in Karachi on 7 December 2015. Organized in the presence of the Sindh Chief Minister, Syed Qaim Ali Shah, and Minister for Planning, Irrigation, Finance and Energy, Syed Murad Ali Shah, the MoU seeks to develop both long-term and short-term customised professional development courses for engineers, develop Master's and Professional Master's programs for engineers and management staff, and provide consultancy services.

GRADUATION ADDRESS


Dr. Rafiul Ahad, Vice President, of Software Development at Oracle Corporation,US:

Narrating his personal story as a stateless young man who could not get a job despite degrees and qualifications, a young Rafiul painted church walls and polished floors before he was introduced to AIT. “I am grateful to AIT for admitting me to the first batch of computer science in 1979, and also to the Royal Thai Government for granting me scholarship to study,” Dr. Ahad reminisced. Asking students to inculcate the spirit of risk-taking, the graduation speaker quoted four lessons from his life □ the ability to take risk, a passion for work, continuous acquisition of knowledge, and a work-life balance. Further, be fair to everyone and treat everyone with respect regardless of social status and stature, he added. <http://goo.gl/y0Wf5u>


Dr. Twarath Sutabutr, Director-General, Energy Policy and Planning Office, Ministry of Energy (Alumni Address):

Dr. Twarath (Master’s, Geotechnical and Transportation Engineering, 1992) highlighted the role that AIT students could play in an increasingly globalised and integrated world. Quoting examples, he cautioned graduands against sharing of false information that could lead to harmful effects in real life. <http://goo.gl/DiInVn>


Prof. Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai, President AIT:

AIT President Prof. Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai reminded all students that “AIT has always taken pride in its important role in resolving transnational cross border challenges.” Mentioning the role played by AIT in the run-up to the Paris Climate Change Conference (COP21), Prof. Worsak stated that AIT will provide Asian solutions to Asian problems in relation to climate change, while using global knowledge. He asked students to maintain a strong association with their alma mater, and hoped that one day, they too would help AIT to continue its mission of serving future generations of world-class citizens. <http://goo.gl/qvPwv6>


Dr. Muhammad Khalil Farooq delivered the Doctoral Student Message:

AIT provided an excellent living environment, where students with diverse backgrounds, cultures and religions live together like a family, Dr. Farooq said. <http://goo.gl/hY311o>

AIT 124th Graduation: 16 December 2015



Officials of Myanmar's Ministry of Construction among graduates



Among the degree recipients were senior officials of the Ministry of Construction, Myanmar led by their Permanent Secretary and Head of Office, Mr. U Kyaw Linn, and Director General Mr. Win Tint. They were enrolled as students of the Professional Master's Program in Project Management which was conducted in Myanmar, and is a custom-made program for Ministry of Construction, Government of Myanmar.

AIT contributes to COP21



Prof. Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai reading the Final Message during RFCC.

As 196 countries from all over the world signed the historic Paris Climate Change agreement, AIT has reasons to rejoice as it has been actively contributing towards the process.

AIT was host to the Regional Forum on Climate Change (RFCC) along with French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, ASEAN Secretariat, and the European Union (EU) from 1-3 July 2015, where 400

participants from 20 countries prepared a message for COP21. The message read out by AIT President Prof. Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai on the concluding day of the Conference made a “Final Call” for COP21. Prof. Mukand Singh Babel of AIT presented the key messages from RFCC at a UNEP event organized on 2 December 2015 at Paris. AIT’s Dr. Shobhakar Dhakal was widely quoted for his views on COP21 including 'The Economist.' His commentary was also published in a special Elsevier issue on “Climate change: A virtual special issue with commentary for #COP21.”

‘Climate Change Asia – AIT’ born on the heels of COP21 agreement

Just as the recent COP21 climate change negotiations reached their conclusion, senior international officials convened at AIT to develop ‘Climate Change Asia—AIT’, which is intended as an Asian region response to climate change.



Dr. Bindu Lohani (left) with Dr. Subin Pinkayan.

Former Asian Development Bank Vice President Dr. Bindu Lohani on 11 December 2015 chaired a one-day strategy session of officials connected to the ADB, World Bank, and United Nations Environment Programme, as well as senior-level climate change scientists, researchers, scholars, consultants and private equity managers. Anchored at AIT, Climate Change Asia will operate as a regional center of excellence to connect research and development, and training on climate change mitigation and adaptation. Dr. Subin Pinkayan, Chairman, AIT Board of Trustees also graced the occasion.

Farewells and Appointments



AIT farewell function

AIT organized a farewell and felicitation function for faculty and staff members who were retiring at the end of 2015. These include Prof. Nguyen Thi Kim Oanh, Prof. Gopal Bahadur Thapa, Dr. Soparth Pongquan, and Ms. Salaya Phunsiri from the School of Environment, Resources and Development (SERD); Assoc. Prof. Erik L.J. Bohez, Mr. Chamlong Waigaesee and Mr. Samwai Sornsrida from School of Engineering and Technology (SET); Ms. Wannapa Pliansri, Ms. Kulvimol Wawsuntiwongse, Ms. Chadarat Nissaipan, Ms. Kalya Bumrungsak, and Mrs. Debra Brown from Administration; and Dr. Supat Wangwongwatana from Regional Resource Centre for Asia and the Pacific.

AIT also announced a new Administration team beginning 1 January 2016 with Prof. Sivanappan Kumar, Prof. Kanchana Kanchanasut, and Prof. Kazuo Yamamoto as Vice Presidents; Prof. Voratas Kachitvichyanukul, Prof. Rajendra Shrestha, and Prof. Nazrul Islam as Deans; and interim administration positions for Mr. Shawn Kelly (External Relations and Communications Office), Ms Chalita Lertwinyu (Royal Thai Government Relations and Government Relations Unit), Karma Rana (Board Secretariat-additional), and Somnuk Yardpaka (Student Counselling). More details at <http://goo.gl/WwjPNw>

Ring out 2015, Ring in 2016: HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Coming up
AIT
ORIENTATION
 5 January 2016

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Lessons for Asean on the globalisation of education:
 Prof. Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai

Lessons for Asean on the globalisation of education

REGION
 WORSAK KANOK-NUKULCHAI

The latest Open Doors report has once again demonstrated the urgent need for Asean countries to take immediate steps for the internationalisation of education. While China, India and South Korea have quickly emerged as players in the domain of international education, Asean, and in particular, Thailand has not made its mark as yet. This is doubly unfortunate, since it was Thailand that took the first step in the internationalisation of education over five decades ago, when it established Asia's first institute of international education in the form of the Sesto Graduate School of Engineering, now known as the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT).

Before we examine the reasons why this region is not a major player in global education, we must look at the figures

released by the Institute of International Education (IIE). Their latest report, titled "Open Doors", shows that over 300,000 students from China now travel to the United States for higher education. India follows next with 122,000 students. China and India combined together now send 45% of international students to the United States.

Combine two other Asian countries, namely South Korea and Saudi Arabia, and these four countries account for nearly 60% of international students in the United States.

This leads us to a moot point. Why can't Thailand and Asean attract these students to study here rather than travel to the United States? No doubt, the US education system is par excellence and has always encouraged globalisation and internationalisation. But this does not mean that we should not learn from them or try and compete, even if in a small way. The US Department of Commerce estimates that in 2014, the US earned US\$50 billion from its international students.

Dr P1 Lavakare, a senior IIE adviser, while recently delivering a talk at AIT stated that the monopoly enjoyed by the United

States has now been broken and China is increasingly emerging as a destination of choice for students.

It is not just international students who are traveling to the US, but over 500,000 US students also travelled abroad for higher education. While the United Kingdom receives the highest number of these students, Thailand receives less than 2,000 of them. Interestingly out of non-European destinations, China is the leading destination for US students.

Based on our experience at AIT, which was Asia's first international institute of higher education established in 1959, we can offer some suggestions on how to emerge as a global destination. First, internationalisation does not merely mean hiring international faculty members.

Besides globally recruited faculty and students, and world class facilities, we need to inculcate a global outlook among our students. Our graduates should possess the ability to apply global solutions to local problems, and this will help us produce global citizens who are employable in any part of the world. It is this internationalisation that helped AIT achieve the

first rank in the world in terms of international orientation in a recently published U.S. Multirank Ranking.

Secondly, it may not be financially and technically feasible to emerge as global leaders in all fields of study or disciplines. This is where another lesson can be learnt from AIT. We have always concentrated our energies in a few select disciplines rather than start teaching each and every subject. This has helped AIT emerge as a global centre in many subject areas. The recent QS ranking by subject testified to this when our Civil and Structural Engineering department emerged among the top 150-200 in the world. It indeed an honour that we were ranked at par with Colorado State University—a university which helped us in establishing the discipline of structural engineering in the 1960s.

A third factor that takes time to build is the reputation and performance of the alumni. When alumni perform well, the global reputation of the institute increases manifold. For too long, many national universities have been content with producing graduates who excel only in their home countries. At AIT, we have always attempted

to go beyond boundaries. Today, it is not just in Thailand that our graduates have excelled. One of our alumni has become the premier of Taiwan, and when we met him to congratulate him, he had extremely fond memories of the institute.

Finally, institutes have to foster regional and international networks. I mentioned this at the "World Science and Technology Forum in Korea" recently, where I mooted the idea of increasingly educational and research networks in this region. Held as a prelude to the OECD Ministerial meeting, scholars from all over affirmed the need to look at Asean and Asian-level networking institutions like AIT.

Building on these factors, through our targeted focus in select fields of study, alumni excellence and building international networks, helped us reach a stage where we are the envy of many global universities. Other universities in the region can join hands and start moving towards building this region as an academic and research hub.

Prof Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai is President of the Asian Institute of Technology.

Editor:
 Bajinder Pal Singh
 bajinder@ait.asia
 Designer:
 Nadhika Mendhaka
 Photos:
 Paitoon Tinnapong

For feedback, contact
 Media and Communications
 Unit at AIT
 mcu@ait.asia

AIT President Prof. Worsak Kanok-Nukulchai's Opinion piece titled "Lessons for ASEAN on the globalisation of education" was published in the Bangkok Post (22 December 2015).

It can be read at this link: <http://goo.gl/Gk6isw>

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