

life • FEATURE

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A HIGHER VISION

AIT's president wants the university to be an academic player regionally and worldwide

STORY BY: YVONNE BOHWONGPRASERT

Eden Y. Woon's impressive portfolio has seen him through stints in the military, the private sector and academia make him a perfect candidate to lead the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) to greater heights as it celebrates its 60th anniversary this year.

Established six decades ago, the institute has been known as a leading regional postgraduate institution for students, near and far—a melting pot for multinational and multicultural experiences for both its students and teachers.

According to the Chinese-American who took up the AIT's presidency last September, AIT has several interesting elements. Founded in 1959, the mission was to develop professionals who would play an integral part in development of the region and its assimilation into the global economy.

In the first couple of decades, the institute was extremely successful. Due to this, AIT has some very significant alumni not just from Thailand but also abroad who hold titles in the government, academics and other prominent fields. All of them have contributed to the economic growth of the region where they reside.

The fields of study included construction, civil engineering, infrastructure, water resources, waste management and the likes; in short, issues that a developing country needs to make progress. Of course, besides these subjects, students get to pick from a slew of other courses.

Woon, previously vice-president for Institutional Advancement at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, said AIT had not foregone its core strengths, which are capacity building and working on issues that help develop the region.

Regional problems seen today are also worldwide problems, he said, including climate change, energy shortage, scarcity of water resources, waste treatment, infrastructure and transportation.

"I want to take our core strengths and really modernise it in several ways. One, I want to re-establish a global footprint of AIT. Students are mainly from Southeast Asia and South Asia and I think we need to bring back more students from

RIGHT: AIT president Dr Eden Y. Woon's vision is to work towards making the institute an attractive option for both Thai and foreign students alike.



BELOW: AIT president Dr Eden Woon, fourth right, speaks with members of AIT's multinational and multicultural student body.



"So right now China, Japan and Korea are sending much fewer students than they should. The reason for this is largely because many of their own universities have come up, while Chinese students have preferred to go ahead—especially the US, UK and Australia—for higher education, unlike before when they opted to study in Asia," said Woon, who served in the US Air Force until 1983.

He is adamant that AIT has a niche, and still has much to offer. He has been to China twice in the last five months to revisit some of his former university contacts to inform them about what AIT has to offer.

"Regular students by and large will be Asians, but I am looking to encourage exchange students and professors

come for three or four months to join us. This will also allow our students to go out into the world. This will really add to both the diversity of the campus and also the diversity of the learning."

Secondly, his desire is to inject more innovation into AIT's core strengths.

For one, he desires to see more research done on answering such questions like how artificial intelligence impacts the research in earthquake prediction? Or how robotics apply to agriculture.

"I also want to bring in more innovation into education and the curriculum. We have students that come here for four semesters, for a master's degree. They spend one year in the classroom and one year in research. I want to do a little mix and match. I want some of the students to go away for a semester to get work experience abroad."

"Perhaps if they don't choose that option, they could intern at a company. This will give them more relevant experience and also this will serve to tie AIT more with industry. I think AIT now has tremendous relationships with governments and NGOs, but its relationship with industry is not as developed as it should be."

Woon also stressed the need to become well-known among the masses, not just among specific groups.

"In downtown Bangkok, young adults would probably not know about AIT. That is why having a niche is not sufficient. To make more of an impact, we need to work closely with industry. When they share what their needs and wants are, we will be able to develop our curriculum in a more constructive and attractive manner."

"There is also a high chance for them to send us students that will be able to self-fund their education."

Woon said the biggest challenge in all this is resources, and also building up the brand, because at the moment they have a very good, very niche brand. And to get recognised at a global university level, one needs to be good at research.

"They [faculties] have to continue to do the research and publish the papers so people will get to know us better. Secondly, we have to look at globalisation in terms of branding, in terms of publicity and exchanges, in terms of research collaboration, we need to get the name

A HIGHER VISION: THE BANGKOK POST

Following the enunciation of his vision last September, President Eden Y. Woon shared his thoughts with the *Bangkok Post*. In his first major public interview after assuming the Presidency of the Institute, President Woon informed the Bangkok Post about how he wants AIT to be an academic player both regionally and worldwide.

Delving into AIT's glorious past, President Woon

spoke about modernizing the Institute, re-establishing its global footprint, and injecting more innovation into its core strengths. He also stressed the need to become well-known among the masses, not just among specific groups.

Read the interview at these links:

Bangkok Post: <https://bit.ly/2GOGDle>

AIT: <https://bit.ly/2BSP1AY>



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AIT Signs Academic Exchange Agreement with UNU-IAS

The Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) has signed an academic exchange agreement with the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS), based in Tokyo. The agreement was signed by AIT President Eden Y. Woon and UNU-IAS Director Dr. Kazuhiko Takemoto on February 5, 2019.

The agreement will pave the way for collaborative research, lectures, symposiums, and exchanges of students and researchers between the two institutions. Dr. Takemoto stated that AIT plays an important role in academic research within higher education, and its work in capacity building is widely recognized. President Woon spoke about his vision to encourage innovation and expand AIT's footprint. He also thanked Prof. Mario Tabucanon, Visiting Professor at UNU-IAS and Emeritus Professor at AIT for playing an instrumental role in bringing the two institutions together. Dr. Takemoto was accompanied on his visit to AIT



Dr. Kazuhiko Takemoto

by Prof. Tabucanon, and Dr. Hiroaki Takiguchi, Project Director, UNU-IAS.

DNP and AIT collaborate on a pilot project for Khao Yai National Park

The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Khao Yai is implementing a pilot project in collaboration with AIT and the Department of National Parks, Wildlife, and Plant Conservation (DNP) to develop a mobile app integrated with low-energy Bluetooth beacon technology. The app will aid visitors during their stay in the Park by providing them with context-aware information about various aspects of the sites they are visiting.

Dr. Naveed Anwar, Executive Director, AIT Solutions unveiled the pilot project at the inauguration of the 200-year commemorative US-Thai Friendship Trail organized at the Park on 9 February 2019, where General Surasak Karnjanarat, Thailand's Minister for Natural Resources and Environment and Mr. Peter Haymond, Chargé d'Affaires, Embassy of the United States in Thailand, jointly inaugurated the commemorative trail. While AIT is developing the app, the solar-powered beacons have been developed by a team led by Prof. James She, Director of the

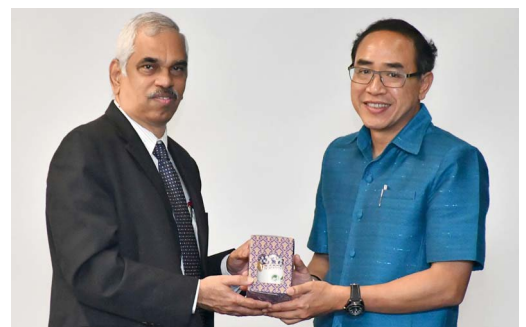


AIT Solutions Team in the Khao Yai National Park

Social Media Lab, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST), with content provided by Park officials.

Ambassador of Thailand to Viet Nam visits AIT

H.E. Mr. Tanee Sangrat, Ambassador, Royal Thai Embassy in Viet Nam, and Ms. Woratip Otrakul, First Secretary, Royal Thai Embassy in Viet Nam, visited the Asian Institute of Technology on 7 February 2019. Leading the talks for AIT was Prof. Sivanappan Kumar, Vice President for Academic Affairs. Also representing AIT were Prof. Weerakorn Ongsakul of the School of Environment, Resources and Development (SERD), Ms. Chalita Lertwinyu, Mr. Shawn Patrick Kelly, and Piyapat Kallaya.



Prof. Sivanappan Kumar (left) and H.E. Mr. Tanee Sangrat.

New School of Engineering and Technology Dean Appointed



Professor Dieter Trau

Professor Dieter Trau of the National University of Singapore (NUS) will be the next Dean of the AIT School of Engineering and Technology (SET), starting on July 1, 2019. He will have the rank of Professor and will also be the new Director of the AIT Entrepreneurship Center, which will be set up later this year.

Professor Trau is currently a tenured Associate Professor and Associate Head Research in the Biomedical Engineering Department of the National University of Singapore. He received a degree in Chemical and Bioengineering from the FH Aachen University of Applied Sciences, Germany, in 1994 and a PhD in Chemistry from the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology in 2001.

Dr Shobhakar Dhakal Promoted to the Rank of Professor

Dr. Shobhakar Dhakal has been promoted to the rank of Professor. This follows approval by the Board of the Trustees at its meeting held on 31 January 2019.

Dr. Dhakal joined AIT as an Associate Professor in the School of Environment, Resources and Development (SERD) in July 2012.



Dr. Shobhakar Dhakal

He received a Ph.D. in Energy Management and Mitigation of Urban Heat Island from the University of Tokyo in 2000. Prior to this, Dr. Dhakal received a Bachelor's Degree in Electrical Engineering from the SV Regional College of Engineering and Technology, South Gujarat University, India in 1993, and a Masters of Engineering in Energy Policy and Planning from AIT in 1996.

Dr Bonaventura H W Hadikusumo Promoted to the Rank of Professor

Dr. Bonaventura H. W. Hadikusumo has been promoted to the rank of Professor. This follows approval by the Board of the Trustees at its meeting held on 31 January 2019.

Dr. Hadikusumo joined AIT as an Assistant Professor in the School of Engineering and Technology (SET) in July 2002

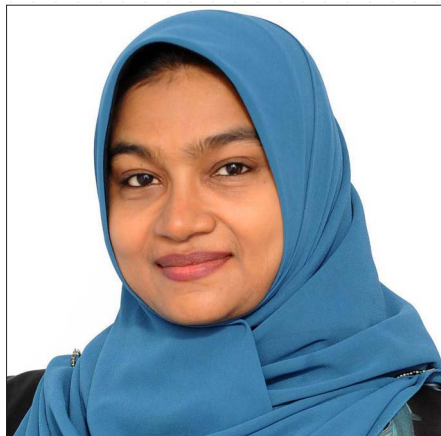
and was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in April 2009.



Dr. Bonaventura H. W. Hadikusumo

He received a Ph.D. in Construction Management from the University of Hong Kong in 2001. Prior to this, Dr. Hadikusumo received a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia in 1996, and he graduated from AIT in 1998, earning a Masters of Engineering in Construction Management.

AIT Alumna Appointed Deputy Minister in the Maldives



Fathimath Yumna

AIT alumna Fathimath Yumna (Master's in Gender and Development Studies, 2004) has been appointed as Deputy Minister of Gender, Family and Social Services, Republic of the Maldives. She previously served as consultant to the collaborative project between the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and UNWOMEN and also as Director General in the Department of Gender and Family Protection Services in the Maldives' Ministry of Health and Family.

WORKSHOP



Inception workshop on "ENRICH: Enhancing Resilience to future Hydro-meteorological Extremes in the Mun River Basin in the Northeast of Thailand"

5 February 2019

AIT Alumna Dr Jirapan Chaowanapong receives NRCT Award

AIT alumna Dr. Jirapan Chaowanapong has been honored with an award by the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT) for the best top three thesis in the field of Economics. The Award Ceremony was organized on 2 February 2019 on the occasion of "Inventors Day" at Bitec, Bangna.



Dr. Jirapan Chaowanapong receiving the NRCT Award.

Her thesis title is "Factoring influencing a firm's decision to conduct remanufacturing: Evidence from the Thai industries." She worked with her supervisor at AIT Dr. Juthathip Jongwanich.

Condolences: Prof S M Qureshi

AIT Hall of Fame Inductee Prof. S M Qureshi passed away on 17 February 2019. The founder Vice-Chancellor of Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET), Jamshoro, Pakistan, he also served as a Federal Secretary in the Government of Pakistan and as an honorary advisor to the Governor of Sindh Province, Pakistan.



Prof. S M Qureshi

After completing a Bachelor's Degree in Engineering from the University of Karachi, Dr. Qureshi came to AIT to pursue a Master's in Structural Engineering and Construction (1965). He received a Ph.D. from the University of Sheffield, UK.

An active participant in AIT affairs, he was among the 11 alumni to be inducted in the AIT Hall of Fame in September 2010. He also attended the inauguration of the modernized AIT Library in April last year, where he was among the alumni who greeted HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn.



Seminar on "Reversing Climate Change within a Generation-- The Pivotal Role of Algae"

Dr. Mark Huntley
(University of Hawaii at Hilo)

1 February 2019



Special Talk on "The PM_{2.5} Episode in Bangkok: Situation, Outlook and How to protect yourself"

Dr. Ekbordin Winijkul
(AIT)

7 February 2019



Seminar on "International Collaboration in the Field of Environmental Sciences and Management"

Dr. Lunchakorn Prathumratana (Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology, South Korea)

11 February 2019



Seminar on "Climate Investment, Climate Finance and Carbon Market"

12 February 2019



Talk on "Modelling and Mapping of Above-Ground Biomass of Mangrove Forests and their Replacement Land Uses Using Sentinel Imagery," and

Talk on "Remote Sensing of Tropical Forests for Natural Resource and Environmental Management: Recent Advances and Future Opportunities"

Dr. Armando Apan (University of Southern Queensland, Australia)

13 February 2019



Seminar on "Revisiting Development Processes in Asia: How Can Fast-growing Economies of Today Adopt, Adapt and Leapfrog?"

Dr. Bindu Lohani (AIT)

13 February 2019



Seminar on "Rural Sanitation and Wastewater Management in China: Toilet Revolution and Challenges"

Yuansong Wei and Meixue Chen (Chinese Academy of Sciences)

13 February 2019



Seminar on "MRC Support for Sustainable Hydropower Development in Lower Mekong Basin"

Mr. Palakorn Chanbanyong (Mekong River Commission Secretariat)

18 February 2019



Seminar on "Energy System in Transition and its Impact on Research and Educational Program"

Prof. Mohsen Assadi
(University of Stavanger, Norway)

20 February 2019



Seminar on "Distributed Plug-and-Play Event-Based Control for DC Microgrids Using Directional Radio Links"

Dr. Kamyar Mehran (Queen Mary University of London)

20 February 2019



Seminar on "Experiences in Design and Implementation of Megawatt Scale Isolated Microgrid Systems"

Dr. Wuthipong Suponthana
(Leonics Co. Ltd.)

22 February 2019



Seminar on "5G and Beyond Role and Function of APT"

Masanori Kondo (Asia-Pacific Telecommunity)

20 February 2019

Career Fair & Research Exhibition
27 March 2019
AIT Day in Bangladesh
11 March 2019

AIT Cultural Show

(16 February 2019)



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