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pped out with
oot by referr-
amnesty as a
s Majesty the

ly vocational students —
cruising in front of the
Bangkwang Prison.

The paper devoted
three full columns on Page
3 commenting on the
amnesty.

Phya Mai said in one of
the columns that he won-

was a confirmation that
those released were actual-
ly wrong-doers.

In another column
Chupong Maneenoi com-
mented that he was look-
ing for an answer to his
speculation of the motive
behind the amnesty.

terday greeted the amnes-
ty with more enthusiasm
and went out to report the
news in full details.

Refraining from making
any obvious comments on
the amnesty, Thai Rath —
one of the papers that
usually avoid committing

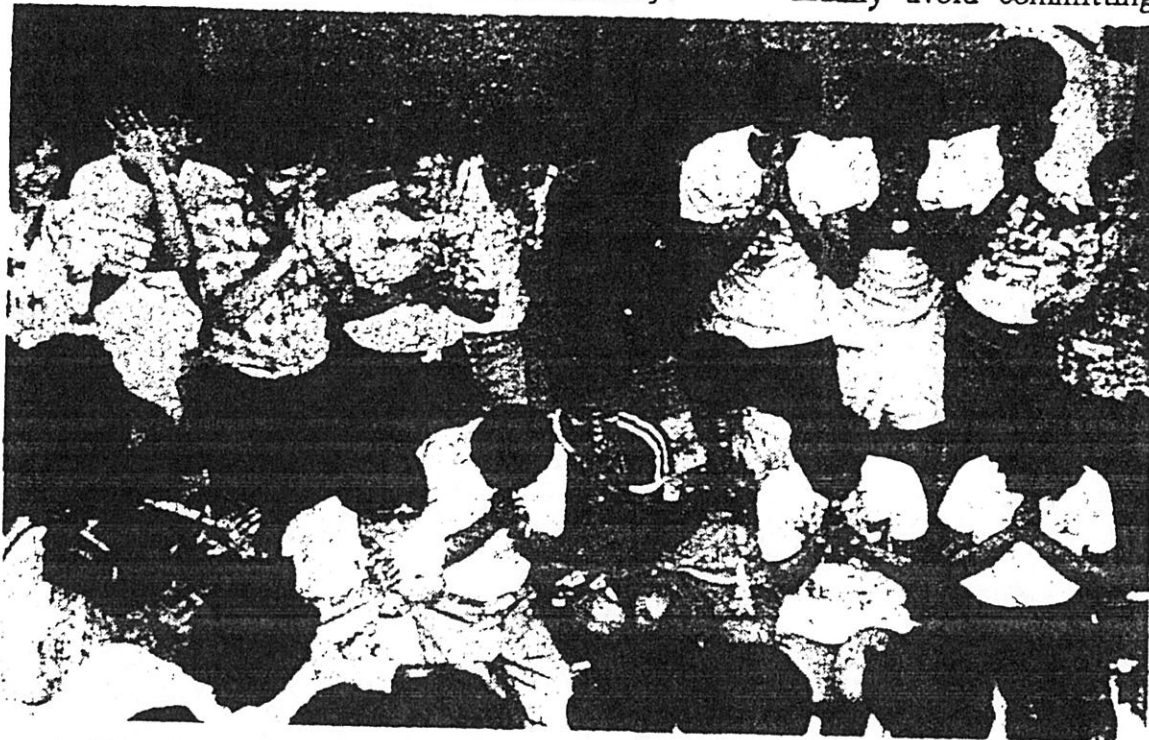
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A "WAI" from the released....one that is enough to reflect their gratitude for their freedom.



SHOUTINGS, weepings and tears greeted the released October 6 defendants as they leave the Krungthep Maha Nakhon Special Prison to freedom.... and to the arms of their relatives and friends who gathered in the hundreds in front of the prison.

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THEIR HEARTS SPEAK

Sutham Saengrathum

Arom Phonphang

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ain...

Premier warns amnestied 19 to behave well

PRIME MINISTER Kiangsak Chomanan yesterday warned the 19 former Oct 6 defendants to be humble in giving interview to the Press and demonstrate proper behaviour to the public.

Addressing the 19 released defendants who called on him at his Bangkok residence yesterday morning, Gen Kiangsak said: "I believe all of you are loyal to the nation, religion and monarchy and strongly desire to build the country. We must cement our opinions and reasons for the sake of the nation."

The Premier reiterated that he believes in the 19 persons' patriotism and added that he had never regarded them as communists "I want you to go back to your classes. I am glad to learn that your respect to your teachers has not faded."

"Let's forget the past and consider it a bad dream. Now we should have an understanding and start our lives anew. We must know the facts and theories and listen to each other's reasons in order to

build the country," he said.

The speech which last about 30 minutes was made to the 19 after they had their breakfast with the Prime Minister, his family and few senior government officials.

Present during the down-to-earth talks were the Premier's advisor Dr Arthit Urairat, the Premier's Secretary General

Porn Thanaphum and television commentator Pichai Vasanassong.

The 19 were led to Gen Kiangsak's residence by Mr Pichai, a former prisoner in connection with the March 26, 1977 abortive coup.

Gen Kiangsak said he

decided to push through the Amnesty Act after being granted an audience with His Majesty the King recently at Puping Rajanives in Chiang Mai.

"I am not involving the King in this matter. But I was permitted by His Majesty to do so."

Continued Page 3



The 19 former Chomanan to thank

Celebrate

STUDENTS of eight masat University came home-coming celebration of the Oct 6 case.

The celebration with the 19 and their relatives at Thammasat University food to 99 monks in and other temples.

After the religious procession to Lam Poh in campus to have their President of Tham Nucharas, will introduce the celebration.

At 9.30 am, Rectorial "Bai Sri" ceremony later hold talks with

In the afternoon, Thum and Surachart Chulalongkorn University meet their teachers.

Chulalongkorn University come celebration for pong Building in the

The 19 will be invited to Technology tomorrow (the Hall of pm).

On Friday, students hold a "To the People" Con

COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS DRAFT

THE ADVISORY Committee for the Administration Regulations of the Prime Minister will discuss a draft on regulations to control the work of government officials aimed at preventing them from getting lazy on Wednesday.

The essence of the draft is for the superintendents of all units of the government agencies to come up with specific schedule for work to be done by their subordinates who will be required to complete their work within a fixed time.

According to the committee, which is chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Sompob Hotrakitt, the drafted regulations will give emphasis on those government agencies dealing directly with the public.



One of the 19, Sutham Saengprathum, presents a bouquet to Premier Kiangsak upon their arrival at his residence.

Satellite plunges back into atmosphere

WASHINGTON—Pegasus 1, one of the largest satellite shot into space, plunged back into the atmosphere yesterday over Africa, space agency officials said.

The satellite re-entered the earth's atmosphere over northern Angola at 2.12 am EDT (0612 GMT), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) said.

Several hours after the fiery re-entry there still were reports of visual sightings. NASA officials had predicted the satellite could scatter flaming pieces over an area 2,715 miles long and 125 miles wide. However, they said that the danger of anyone being hit by debris was slight.

NASA initially reported the re-entry took place just off the west coast of Africa but revised that location after better tracking information was supplied.

The satellite, launched in 1965, measured meteoroid



M-E SUMMIT TOWARD A

CAMP DAVID, Maryland—US President Jimmy Carter and Israeli Prime Minister Begin concluded a 46-hour Middle East summit meeting moved toward a close.

The outcome of the nearly two weeks of talks remained a mystery as Carter attempted to bring Begin and Egyptian President Sadat to a performance of the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra at the Kennedy Center.

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former Oct 6 defendants
behaviour to the public.

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the Amnesty Act after
being granted an audience
with His Majesty the King
recently at Paping Rajani-
ves in Chiang Mai.

"I am not involving the
King in this matter. But I
was permitted by His
Continued Page 3



The 19 former defendants "wai" Prime Minister Kriangsak Chomanan to thank him for the amnesty at his residence.

Celebration time

STUDENTS of eight universities will swarm Thammasat University campus today to participate in a home-coming celebration for the 19 former defendants of the Oct 6 case.

The celebration will be kicked off at 6.00 am with the 19 and their relatives and colleagues as well as Thammasat University Rector Prapas Auychai offering food to 99 monks invited from nearby Wat Mahathat and other temples.

After the religious ceremony, all of them will proceed to Larn Poh in front of the Arts Faculty in the campus to have their breakfast together.

President of Thammasat University Club, Krisdang Nutcharas, will introduce the 19 to people attending the celebration.

At 9.30 am, Rector Prapas will preside over a traditional "Bai Sri" ceremony to welcome the 19 who will later hold talks with interested students until midday.

In the afternoon, two of the 19, Sutham Saengprathum and Surachart Bumrungsuk, both students of Chulalongkorn University will go to their university to meet their teachers.

Chulalongkorn University students also plan a welcome celebration for the two at a lawn near Chakrapong Building in the campus.

The 19 will be invited to King Mongkut's Institute of Technology tomorrow to a celebration at "Sala Virachon" (the Hall of the Heroes), starting from 1.00 pm.

On Friday, students of eight universities will again hold a "To the People's Embrace" celebration to wel-

Continued Page 3



Sutham Saengprathum, pre-
Premier Kriangsak upon
dence.

M-E SUMMIT MOVES TOWARD A CLOSE

CAMP DAVID, Maryland—US President Jimmy Carter and Prime Minister Me-

INSIDE

Art Buchwald
A NEW
BUILDING
FOR THE
SENATE
P 2

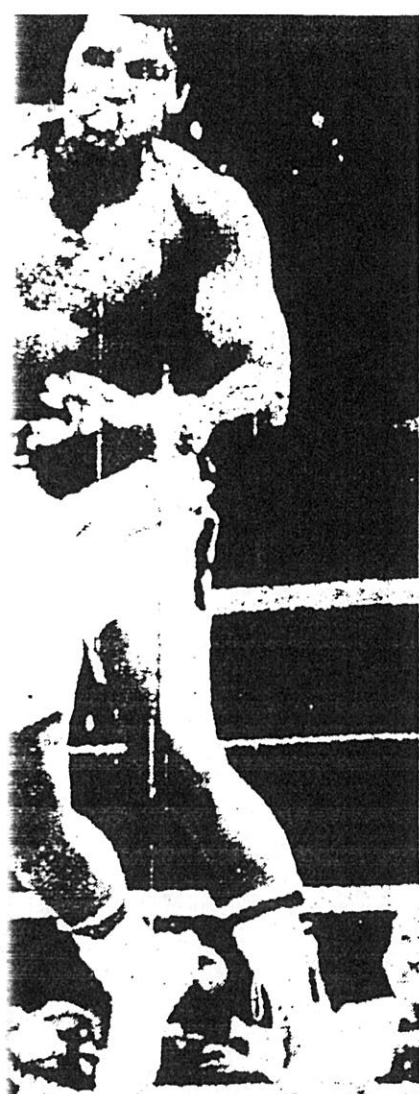
CAIRO
PESSIMISTIC
ABOUT
RESULT
P 4

Business '78

MUAY THAI
TURNING
INTO BIG
BUSINESS

18

SLEEP



t a ducking WBA champion Leon Superdome in New Orleans.—AP

tion



cham- were wild now as Ali appeared into a slightly tired. But the former Spinks's rushed in to land two good rights to Spinks' de- face. — Ali's round.

ROUND THIRTEEN

A right by Ali landed on Spinks' forehead. Spinks came back with a short right to the stomach. Spinks' frustration at not being able to hit Ali seemed to sap some of his confidence. Ali hurt Spinks with a right uppercut to the jaw. Another right by Ali caught Spinks on the chin as he came in. — Ali's round.

ROUND FOURTEEN

Ali caught Spinks with a lunging right to the face. Spinks found Ali's body with a left hook and a right cross as the champion came in low. Spinks was still offline with most of his punches. Ali usually was able to tie up Spinks when the champion rushed in wildly. — Ali's round.

ROUND FIFTEEN

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Vol. 3 No. 588

Kriangsak turns chef again...

Prime Minister Kriangsak Chomanan turned a chef again yesterday when he went into his kitchen to cook curry fried rice for the 19 former defendants of the Oct 6 case who visited him yesterday at resident to thank him.

Former leader of the National Student Centre of Thailand, Sutham Saengprathum, represented the group in presenting a bouquet of flowers to Gen Kriangsak upon their arrival.

After receiving the bouquet, the Prime Minister walked straight to the kitchen to cook the rice while some women reporters gave helping hands by passing him spices and dressings.

Sutham and his colleagues, in a jovial mood related their daily lives in prisons. Sutham said he cultivated orchids which were bred by Mr Pichai Vasanang, who was formerly detained at the same prison in connection with the March 26 abortive coup.

Sutham and former labour leader Arom Pongpa-ngan and seven others sat at the same table as Gen Kriangsak during breakfast while the rest had their meal with the Premier's wife, Khunying Virat, and his son Pong-

Continued Page 3

Premier amnes to beh

PRIME MINISTER Kriangsak Chomanan to be humble in giving interview to the Press

Addressing the 19 released defendants who called on him at his Bangkhen residence yesterday morning, Gen Kriangsak said: "I believe all of you are loyal to the nation, religion and monarchy and strongly desire to build the country. We must cement our opinions and reasons for the sake of the nation."

The Premier reiterated that he believes in the 19 persons' patriotism and added that he had never regarded them as communists "I want you to go back to your classes. I am glad to learn that your respect to your teachers has not faded."

"Let's forget the past and consider it a bad dream. Now we should have an understanding and start our lives anew. We must know the facts and theories and listen to each other's reasons in order to

build the country," said.

The speech which about 30 minutes made to the 19 after had their breakfast the Prime Minister family and few senior government officials.

Present during down-to-earth talks the Premier's advisor Arthit Urairat, the Premier's Secretary Ge-

COMMITTEE DISCUSS DRA

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According to the committee, which is chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Sothakrit, the drafted regulations will give emphasis

Satellite plunges back into atmosphere

time in accusing the ASEAN of going counter to the aspirations of the Southeast Asian peoples for genuine independence, peace and neutrality.....", the agency said.

"Now, Moscow has changed its mind and decided to court the ASEAN's favour. And without the slightest hesitation Hanoi declared its 'agreement' with the ASEAN's aims," the agency said.

"Isn't it distasteful to see Hanoi dance to the tune of the Kremlin to the extent that it does not

Hartling told newsmen at Kuala Lumpur airport that he would fly to a refugee camp, housing about 5,000 Vietnamese refugees, on the east coast of Malaysia today to take further measures for the welfare of the refugees.

He said Malaysia was playing an important role in dealing with the problem of resettlement of the Vietnamese refugees passing through this country since the end of the Indochina war in 1975.

Since 1975, Malaysia has harboured more than 20,000 refugees, mostly Vietnamese, who fled the Communist rule in their homelands. The arrival of Vietnamese refugees in Malaysia increased this year, and at present more than 13,000 of them are waiting in camps on the east coast for repatriation to western countries.

Hartling said UNHCR had allocated US\$25 million this year for the care of the refugees in Southeast Asia, and 60 per cent of this sum would be spent in Thailand which was giving shelter to more than 100,000 refugees from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam.

Hartling later called on Foreign Minister Tengku Ahmad Rithauddeen for talks on the resettlement of the refugees still remaining here.

United States and Australian officials are currently vetting the refugees for resettlement in their countries at the rate of more than 1,000 a month.

Hartling will also meet Prime Minister Datuk Hussein Onn and Home Minister Tan Sri Ghazalie Shafie before leaving for Singapore on September 20 on the last leg of the tour. He has already visited Thailand, China, Laos and Vietnam.—Reuter

From Page One

WARNS

Majesty to clarify the truth to the people," he said.

He added: "I am not seeking political support by releasing all of you. I do not want assistance from anybody. Releasing you will on the contrary be a risk to me. But I think what I have done is right and just."

The Premier reiterated that he had no intention of using the 19 as a campaign instrument but "I know very well that some people are trying to use you as an instrument for their interest."

Gen. Kriangsak posed with the 19 for photographers at his residence after the speech. They returned at around 11.00 am.

BREAKFAST

pipat at a separate table.

"I could not sleep well in prison for it was very bright with lights at night but they switched off the lights at my house," Arom told the Premier.

Sutham thanked Gen Kriangsak for "pushing us out of the prison before we expected. And even

one minute of freedom is precious to all of us."

Gen Kriangsak and Khunying Virat gave "Luang Poo Waen" coins to each of the 19 after breakfast.

SUMMIT

were at "a critical stage." The source said they could end in a full or partial agreement or with failure.

Earlier Begin's press aide said the American news media were being too optimistic and the Egyptian press too pessimistic about the Camp David summit.

Dan Pattir gave no hint of the state of the talks in a telephone interview with Israel Radio.—Agencies

TALKS

bases from which the United States backed its war effort in Indochina, as well as Hanoi's acceptance of the continued presence here of American forces does not necessarily prevent better relations with Manila.

Diplomats believe that Hanoi's desire to build up its war-torn economy and border tensions have prompted Vietnam

soften past criticism of ASEAN as Western-inspired and to seek a closer relationship to protect its flanks. Neither side seem to believe that Vietnam is interested in joining the organisation at present.

While his officials were talking yesterday, the 72-year-old Premier had a relaxed motor-tour of Manila, government sources said.

Apart from talks yes—Reuter

CELEBRATION

come the 19 at Chulalongkorn University's big auditorium.

A "Bai Sri" ceremony will also be held at the university on the same day. The ceremony will be participated by Chulalongkorn University Rector Kasame Suwannakul, students and workers.

SATELLITE

96 feet.

NASA had predicted about 21,000 pounds of the satellite and its attached rocket stage would burn up from re-entry heat, but that about 1,600 pounds of stronger metals might survive and hit the earth although they would be broken into perhaps hundreds of pieces.

The satellite originally orbited 325 miles up on a path that took it 31 degrees north and 31 degrees south of the equator. It had been tugged back toward earth by atmospheric friction to approaches as close as 158 miles from earth.

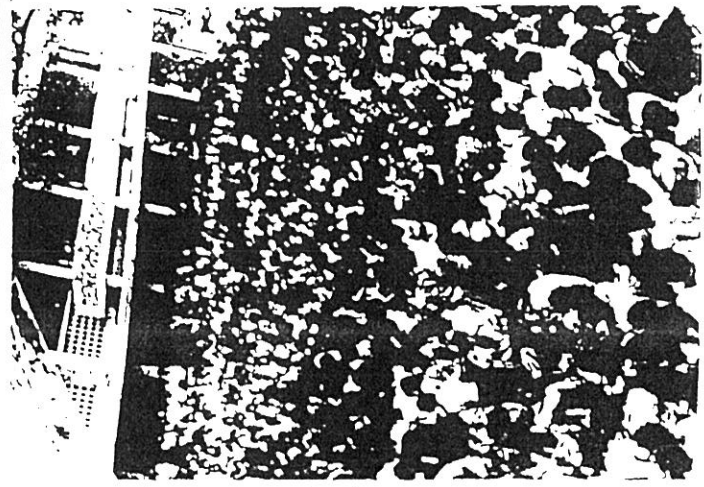
Two other Pegasus satellites also were launched in 1965. Pegasus 3 re-entered without fanfare in 1969 over the Pacific Ocean. Pegasus 2 is still in orbit.



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LOCAL NEWS



Pictures show, clockwise, students warmly welcoming the 19 released defendants at Lam Poh in Thammasat University campus. One of the 19, Sutham Saengprathum, is seen offering food to a monk during the religious ceremony in the morning. Some of the 19 then pose for photographers with their relatives and defence lawyers. The poster behind them reads: "Welcome the Innocent People". Deputy Chulalongkorn University Rector Prapong Vejjajiva is shown in the last picture tying a white cord around Sutham's wrist during a "Bai Sri" ceremony at Chulalongkorn University's big auditorium.



Warm welcome for released students

MORE THAN 1,000 students from various institutes turned up at Thammasat University yesterday to warmly welcome the 19 former defendants of the Oct 6 case who were released last Saturday.

The celebration began yesterday in the afternoon, brations, Sutham and Surachart also called on University Rector Kasame Suwanakul, concurrently Minister of the Universities Bureau, to thank him for being a student of the Law Faculty, and part of those who fought for their freedom.

Fake new 5 baht coins found
F A K E sandwich-type five-baht coins were recently discovered.

Bess, Cherry wreak

orning in connection with
were stabbed to death last

or stabbed him 23 times. He
died on the spot. The
ve knife accidentally cut
ly Somchai's wrist.

he Yongyuth reportedly
jumped upstairs to snatch
a key from Orasa to open
the safe but she resisted.
Orasa was stabbed and was
seriously injured. Her 70-
year-old grandmother was
also hit on the head.

ed Police said the two ar-
rested, Pongsak and Sui-
nai, jointly planned the
robbery.

ued for extortion

olice private attached to Pracha-
s sued in the Military (Criminal)
assaulting a civilian.

nai sae Heng, who filed a lawsuit
t S. Somtha told the court that
achart on June 7 on charges of

part asked for money in exchan-
he refused to give him (Sura-

her colleagues then take him to a
stre and assaulted him, Somchai
ourt to take legal action against

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ese Technology to reflect a
on- decision of the United
Nations Conference on
on, Human Settlements held
ves in Vancouver two years
pro- ago.

rio- Taking part in the
78- meeting are representatives
am- from Australia, Bangla-
the- desh, China, France, India,
for Indonesia, Japan, Nepal,
der the Netherlands, New Zea-
of land, Philippines, Republic
the of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thai-
try, land, USSR, United King-
and dom and the United
States.

PRIME MINISTER Kriangsak Chomanan last night
told representatives of ten universities during a two-
hour meeting at the Government House to give up their
planned home-coming party for the 19 former defen-
dants of the October 6 case at Chulalongkorn Universi-
ty.

The party, to be co-hosted by ten universities —
Chulalongkorn, Thammasat, Ramkhamhaeng, Kasetsart,
Silpakorn, Khon Kaen, Prasarnmitr, Mahidol universi-
ties, and King Mongkut's Institute of Technology at
Bangmod and Lard Krabang, was scheduled for Friday.

Deputy Rector of Chulalongkorn University, Pra-
panpong Vejajiva, had earlier turned down the stu-
dents' request to use the campus for the celebration.

Nine students representing the 10 institutes then
went to the Government house where a Cabinet meet-
ing was proceeding and asked to see Minister of the Of-
fice of State Universities, Dr Kasem Suwannakul to be
informed of the government policy concerning the
planned home-coming reception for the 19 former
October 6 defendants.

However, the nine were later summoned by Prime
Minister Kriangsak into a meeting which lasted from
7:15 to 9:10 pm.

Emerging from the Government House, the nine re-
presentatives refused to answer questions put forward
by waiting reporters on the results of the meeting say-
ing that a press conference will be held this morning at
Chakkrapong Building at Chulalongkorn University.

Gen Kriangsak, however, said later that he disagreed
with the proposed home-coming reception to be held
at Chulalongkorn and requested the nine student re-
presentatives to give up the idea.

"I did it just for the sake of the country's survival,"
he said, but did not elaborate.

"If they want to hold such a party, they could
simply do it at their respective campus," he said.

Asked to comment on the future role of the stu-
dents he said: "I don't agree with their playing poli-
tics. Well, they could become involved after gradua-
tion.

"But I am for the idea of activities aimed at uphold-
ing democracy on the campus," he added and again did
not elaborate.

Early in the day the 19 former defendants were
treated to a home-coming reception hosted by the King
Mongkut's Institute of Technology (Bangmod) during
which the October 14 heroes were also commemorat-
ed.

Speeches voicing their determined efforts to fight
for justice in the society were also read out during the
reception which was preceded by a religious ceremony
in the morning.

Picture above shows one of the 19 former defen-
dants, Atthakarn Uppathampakul, receiving flowers
from a girl student of King Mongkut Institute of
Technology.

The Nation Bureau, Sept. 20, 1976, p. 3

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lawyers. The poster behind them reads: "Welcome the Innocent People". Deputy Chulalongkorn University Rector Prapapong Vejajiva is shown in the last picture tying a white cord around Sutham's wrist during a "Bai Sri" ceremony at Chulalongkorn University's big auditorium.

Warm welcome for released students

Fake new 5 baht coins found

F A K E sandwich-type five-baht coins were recently discovered for the first-time in circulation in the city a senior Bangkok Bank official said yesterday.

Mr Narongkiat Trachoo of the bank's Financial Section said the fake coins were quite similar to the genuine ones as they all had copper rings around them.

The new genuine five-baht coins are made of nickel with a piece of copper sandwiched in-between.

The fake coins has the same size and weigh as the genuine one but the inscriptions of the King and the garuda on both sides of the coin are rough, he said.

Smallpox totally eliminated

THE World Health Organization's offer reward since October last year of US\$1,000 (about 20,000 baht) to any person reporting the first case of smallpox has so far been unclaimed.

WHO reported that not a single case of smallpox has been found since October last year.

"That is tantamount to the total elimination of smallpox from the world," it said.

MORE THAN 1,000 students from various institutes turned up at Thammasat University yesterday to warmly welcome the 19 former defendants of the Oct 6 case who were released last Saturday.

The celebration began after dawn with a religious ceremony. The 19 joined other persons, including their relatives, students and lecturers, in offering food to 99 monks in front of the university campus.

The Lam Poh Lawn in front of the Liberal Arts Faculty was crowded with celebrants participating in a northern-style "Bai Sri" ceremony.

The celebrants tied white cords around the wrists of the 19 during the ceremony to welcome them back and wish them happiness in their future.

A couple of students stood on the stage to alternately read a poem depicting their struggle for justice and the regrettable death of their colleagues in their past activities.

Thongchai Thongpao, chief of the lawyers defending them during their trial, and three other lawyers were also present at the celebration.

The 19 released defendants were sometimes seen in a jovial mood and sometimes filled with tears when they related their involvement in the Oct 6, 1976 incident and their past two years in prison.

The celebrants and the 19 stood silently for one minute to commemorate the fallen students during the Oct 6 incident.

Former leader of the National Student Centre of Thailand (NSCT) Sutham Saengprathum announced to the crowd that his two years in prison had inspired him to continue struggling for justice without regards to suffering or discouragement.

Tearful Thongchai Vinijakul told the gathering that he felt sorry for the loss of some colleagues but, "today will be the last day that we will cry for them. We will cry no more."

The celebration ended before midday.

At Chulalongkorn Uni-

versity in the afternoon, about 1,000 students threw another "Bai Sri" ceremony for two of the nineteen released—Sutham Saengprathum, a student of the Law Faculty, and Surachart Bumrungsuk of the Faculty of Political Science. Both were studying at Chulalongkorn University before they were arrested.

The ceremony which was held at the big auditorium was presided over by Deputy Rector Prapapong Vejajiva.

Before the Chula cele-

brations, Sutham and Surachart also called on University Rector Kasame Suwannakul, concurrently Universities Bureau Minister, to thank him for being part of those who fought for their freedom.

Dr Kasame told the two that the university was willing to accept them in the next semester without any condition.

He expressed regret for the bloody riots on Oct 6 which he described as "a black spot in Thailand's history."

Sutham presented a bouquet of orchids to the

Rector and both of them vowed to sacrifice themselves to upgrade the society.

Meanwhile, the homecoming celebration for another two released defendants at Ramkhamhaeng University appeared more colourful than at Thammasat and Chulalongkorn Universities.

The celebration was highlighted with representatives from over 30 university clubs presenting bouquets of flowers to the two — Mahin Tambunperm and Prayoon Akrabavom — and the release of pigeons to mark their freedom.

The two received loud applause from over 10,000 students when they walked up a prepared stage together with Acting Rector Prof Sanga Linasamith.

Prof Sanga acted on behalf of all lecturers in congratulating the two on their freedom and wished them good luck in their future.

'Outsiders' can become ambassadors

OUTSIDERS, including military officers, are expected to be appointed as Thai ambassadors during the annual reshuffle in October, informed sources said yesterday.

Sources said the proposal to name non-officials of the Foreign Ministry as ambassadors was made in-

a Cabinet session recently.

Cabinet had fully thrashed out the proposal but no final decision has yet been made, sources said. Two Thai ambassadors, Mr Sakchai Bumrungsuk attached to Burma and M.L. Suthisathien Svasti to Malaysia, are due to retire on September 30.

SRISAK MEETING HARTLING IN KL

DEPUTY Undersecretary of State for Interior Srisak Thammarak will head a Thai team to Kuala Lumpur today to discuss the refugee problem with United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Poul Hartling, and senior officials of several other countries.

Pol Maj Gen Srisak who will be accompanied by Foreign Ministry officials said he would urge other third countries to take more Indochinese refugees from Thailand.

"The refugee population in Thailand currently recorded at 140,000 persons is a big burden and we can no longer handle the situation ourselves, he said.

Srisak yesterday chaired a meeting at the Interior Ministry to discuss vocational and educational assistance to refugees at various camps throughout the country.

The education will be provided by the Education Ministry under financial aid from the UNHCR, he said.

Where like to live in Europe



plans.

The most concrete discussion appears to have taken place in Riyadh, where Fukuda reportedly offered Japanese Government funding help for Mitsubishi's petrochemical venture. Foreign Ministry sources refused to confirm either this or the version run by the Japanese press that Fukuda had agreed to guarantee market access in Japan for a certain percentage of the plant's eventual production.

The officials said only that the prime minister had promised to "cooperate with petrochemical-related projects." So as not to stab the foundering Japanese petrochemical industry in the back, they say, the government will have to make better progress in carrying out plans for industrial reorganisation before it could consider entering into such a deal. For obvious political reasons, Fukuda would like to avoid angering voters in his industrial constituencies.

In December, the 73-year-old politician faces the presidential election for his ruling Liberal Democratic Party (which carries with it the premiership). With the domestic economy still sagging badly earlier this year, betting was going heavily in favour of party secretary-general Masayoshi Ohira to force Fukuda into an unwanted one-term retirement (REVIEW, Aug. 25).

Ohira's camp lost an important political test case in an August regional election in which one of his disciples was defeated for a prefectural governorship in the southern island of Shikoku (Kagawa prefecture), so Fukuda has been playing his foreign policy card to the hilt to improve his chances at the polls.

The warm reception Fukuda received in the Middle East adds to an impressive list of diplomatic coups staged in recent months, like the long-pending agreement with South Korea for mutual exploitation of continental shelf resources in June and the equally-delayed conclusion of the Japan-China peace and friendship treaty in mid-August.

Along with these diplomatic mop-up operations, the politically cagey premier can point to his less substantial but nevertheless widely-publicised overtures to Asean, to the US in the past year and to fellow advanced industrial nations at the July Bonn summit as evidence that his "multi-directional" foreign policy strategy is alive and well.

With Fukuda's political stock on the rise, a growing number of political analysts here are clearly plumping for the incumbent. "In terms of domestic politics it doesn't really matter if Fukuda can make good on all his pledges including those concerning the Middle East," says one source. "What really counts now is that he has effectively stolen his rivals' thunder."

THAILAND

Paving the way to the polls

The 'Thammasat 18' are freed as Kriangsak clears the decks for a national election

By Richard Nations

Bangkok: Thai Premier Kriangsak Chamanand's unprecedented move in personally introducing an amnesty bill to the National Assembly to free the "Thammasat 18," who had been on trial in a martial law court on charges of treason, communist conspiracy and *lèse majesté*, is seen as an effort by the prime minister to sweep away the political debris from the last military coup two years ago before a return to elected government.

The bill, which passed all three readings before the assembly in one morning session, granted amnesty not only to those on trial, but to "all offenders involved in the demonstrations at Thammasat University" on October 6, 1976. The prime minister was quoted in the English-language daily, *The Nation Review*, as saying it was intended to cover "those who fled to the jungle, the village scouts, the policemen and officials involved in the operations at Thammasat University that day."

The amnesty law has divided opinion in the country. Some in the cabinet wanted this political thorn removed, but disagreed with the means. Many felt the trial should be allowed to run its course so that the traditional amnesty on the king's birthday could be considered. This would avoid interfering with the judicial process. Others opposed the amnesty on political grounds.

The influential English-language *Bangkok Post* gives a flavour of this opinion: "Suspicion has been voiced that [Kriangsak] may be trying to seek the political favour of the leftists... Enactment of the amnesty bill... could cost the prime minister support of the numerous right-wing groups and all the effort he has put into bringing about national reconciliation could be endangered as the right and left again line up in confrontation as the October 6 and October 14 anniversaries approach."

Kriangsak, however, has told the press that if he was not prepared to risk opposition he would not be prime minister in the first place. The timing of the move is viewed by some observers as evidence of Kriangsak's own confidence in his power just when the annual October mi-

litary appointments are being decided, indicating the premier feels he has little to worry about from right-wing elements in the military who will see the amnesty as appeasement.

Moreover, the prime minister was able to claim that the king has been encouraging him to find a solution to the Thammasat issue for some time. After the bill was passed, Kriangsak flew south to meet King Bhumibol at the Taksin Palace. He returned to disclose long-standing royal support for an amnesty.

There are good reasons for clearing up the Thammasat affair before the return to open politics. Despite over a year of trial testimony, no convincing evidence has surfaced to substantiate the state's charges of communist conspiracy and treason. On the contrary, much of the prosecution's own testimony has raised questions over the role of heavily-armed border patrol and special police units as well as ultra-rightist groups in Thammasat University campus on the morning of October 6.

The amnesty law has the clear advantage of settling the whole affair expediently. But there are risks involved. By truncating the trial, as the *Bangkok Post* pointed out, "the government opens itself to the accusation that it may not actually have had a case against the defendants, with connotations that they have been unjustly held all this time and with the result that they could try to make of this a great deal which would be to their own but not the national interest."

The Thai Communist Party has claimed the amnesty as a victory for the people, who forced the government to cave in to popular pressure and release the defendants. Whether the student movement itself will try to make quick political capital out of the 18's release remains to be seen. The day after their release Kriangsak invited all the former defendants to breakfast at his home, where he cautioned them to return to their studies and abjure violence.

But the remarks of former National Student Centre of Thailand leader Sutham Saengprathum illustrate the masterful ambiguity with which the students have evaded questions about their political intentions: "Two years in jail have made me conscious about contributing the right things to society. I have struggled for the right things and I will continue the struggle."