



Above: a SEANET 1982 group photo taken in Bangkok while in the picture at right Mrs Mayuree Chotikul, HS1YL stands with her daughter beside the Japanese satellite on display at the 1972 SEANET convention

A brief history of SEANET in Thailand

By Mayuree Chotikul, HS1YL, former President of RAST

Hello to my amateur radio friends and to all our honourable guests. My callsign is HS1YL, and today I am privileged to have been invited by the Radio Amateur Society of Thailand under the patronage of His Majesty the King to speak to you about the organizing of SEANET conventions over the years. But first I would like to apologise in advance since this account may be missing some details or be incomplete because it covers a long period of time and everything is recalled from memory – for, indeed, I have been committed to RAST for a very long time.

In the past, amateur radio activities in Thailand had yet to be legalised although we were very fortunate to have received informal permission to operate from senior government officials who had supported us then. And, as you probably know, amateur radio in Thailand has overcome all obstacles and is now fully legal according to the law with many licensed operators all over the country.

As for the origins of SEANET, I remember that the decision to stage the first SEANET Convention in Thailand was made at the very first SEANET gathering in Penang in 1971. Kamchai Chotikul, HS1WR-SK and I, HS1YL, travelled to join that event along with four or five other Thai delegates and Malaysia was a very warm host, especially to the Thai delegates, while the event in Penang was a success.

At that time Sribhumi Sukanetr was the Director General of the Post and Telegraph Department and for the second SEANET Convention in Bangkok in 1972 we used the formal name of the “Southeast Asia SEANET Convention” for the first time.

Khun Sribhumi had been helping amateur radio a lot then, supporting various amateur radio activities including contesting and doing everything he could to get amateur radio legalised and during the 1972 SEANET Convention in Bangkok he presided over the activities for two days when we had many delegates attending from various countries.



Above: Sribhumi Sukanetr at the 1972 SEANET Convention; at right: Col Kamchai, HS1WR-SK at the 1977 SEANET

Japan had sent an amateur radio satellite to be put on display at the event and I recall how importing this had faced many obstacles, and in particular from the Customs Department which had said the satellite could be a threat to the stability of the country – this was during the war in Vietnam – and they had demanded that a guarantee be made with a deposit of 400,000 baht. In the end we were able to display the satellite at the convention and this and other activities had impressed the delegates, including a tour of the Singha Beer Brewery, with the first SEANET Convention in Thailand being a big success.

Singapore was the host of the third convention which was also a success while the fourth SEANET Convention was held in Manila in the Philippines and the fifth was in Indonesia, which is a beautiful country and which has a rich culture that impressed everyone. Later, the Philippines and Indonesia would abstain from being a SEANET host for a while, leaving Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei to continue as hosts of the convention during the time that Kamchai, HS1WR-SK was the President of RAST.

After HS1WR passed away and I was elected President of RAST Japan, Australia, India and other countries would later become the hosts of the annual convention.



Dancers at the 1982 convention in Bangkok

It was shortly before RAST was to host the 12th SEANET Convention in Bangkok in 1982 that Kamchai, HS1WR-SK, died and there was no one to take on the role of president of the convention. At that time I was fortunate to know Dr Gunn Nakamdee who was the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Communications and so I invited him to preside over the event which went along well.

Following that the society was facing some problems and so then I invited Chamnong Bhirombhakdi, the owner of the Singha Beer brewery, to preside over the society and he also succeeded in registering the society with the special branch of the Royal Thai Police.

Shortly after that in 1984 RAST would celebrate its 20th anniversary when I invited the Minister of Communications Samak Sundaravej to preside over the event. Khun Samak generated a lot of interest in amateur radio and awareness that our society was 20 years old but the activity was not yet allowed under the law. Khun Samak then kindly introduced the issue of amateur radio activities to His Excellency Prem Tinsulanonda who was Prime Minister at the time. Gen Prem then forwarded this to Squadron Leader Prasong Soonsiri, Secretary-General of the National Security Council, and asked the agency to give amateur radio special consideration. As a result, constraints on the activity were relaxed and barriers were removed up to the point that amateur radio would become fully legalised and regulated.

Incidentally, I would like to mention another event organized by RAST when Kamchai, HS1WR-SK was president that had contributed to the awareness of amateur radio here. This was the IARU Region 3 Conference that was held in 1978, the fourth such conference, with presidents of all IARU R3 member countries attending along with IARU officers, while Khun Sribhumi Sukanetr kindly presided over the proceedings.

Indeed, after his retirement from government service Khun Sribhumi, HS1SS also served as President of RAST for a two-year term.

As for the SEANET Conventions, these meetings have been organized continuously with each participating country alternating as host – and this year Thailand is pleased to be the host again. I hope that this SEANET Convention will strengthen the relationships between all participating amateur radio operators and I would like to wish you all happiness from the bottom of my heart.



Hans Hollstein, HS1BG-SK and Dr Gunn Nakamdee announce a winning number at the lucky draw at the 1982 SEANET Convention in Bangkok



Col Kamchai (centre) with Post and Telegraph Dept Director-General Sribhumi Sukanetr (right) at the 1978 IARU Region 3 Conference in Bangkok