



Thailand's Public Diplomacy Award 2024 (TPDA2024)

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Thailand Foundation opened the nomination process for the Thailand Public Diplomacy Award 2024 (TPDA2024) to the public for a period of three months, from May 16 to August 15, 2024. The Award, which will be presented to 1-3 recipients, aims to: (1) honor individuals, groups, or organizations, whether Thai or foreign, who have significantly enhanced the reputation, prestige, and positive image of Thailand, Thai people, and Thainess on an international level; (2) inspire these recipients to continue their valuable contributions; and (3) raise public awareness that anyone can play a role in advancing Thailand's public diplomacy.

On 17 September 2024, the Board of the Thailand Foundation has made the decision to present the Thailand's Public Diplomacy Award 2024 (TPDA2024) to the **Venerable Phra Phrompacharayanmuni (Ajahn Jayasaro)**, **Mr. Somtow Sucharitkul**, and **The Siam Society under Royal Patronage**, making a total of three awards, in recognition of their outstanding contributions and achievements.

1. The Venerable Phra Phrompacharayanmuni (Ajahn Jayasaro)

The Venerable Phra Phrompacharayanmuni, born Shaun Michael Chiverton and known internationally as “Ajahn Jayasaro,” is a British-born monk who first developed an interest in Buddhism during his youth. In 1978, he joined a monastery in the United Kingdom and became an Anagarika (postulant) under the tutelage of the Venerable Ajahn Sumedho. A year later, he journeyed to Thailand to study Buddhism under the guidance of the Venerable Ajahn Chah, the abbot of Wat Nong Pah Pong in Ubon Ratchathani province and one of the most revered masters of the Thai Forest Monk Tradition. He was ordained as a monk at the age of 22.

For over forty years under monastic life, Ajahn Jayasaro has undertaken numerous initiatives to promote Buddhism to both Thais and foreigners, in Thailand and abroad. The Dhamma teachings and meditation retreats he regularly conducts at the Bahn Rai Thaw Si hermitage in Nakhon Ratchasima have attracted hundreds of attendees from Thailand and other countries. Additionally, he has traveled to over 18 countries in order to give Dhamma lectures. Some of these countries include China, Italy, Qatar, India, the United States, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, and Bhutan.

In terms of writing, Ajahn Jayasaro has authored more than 100 books on Thai Theravada Buddhism, including works on Dhamma teachings, practices for daily life, and the biography and teachings of his teacher, the Venerable Ajahn Chah. These books have been written in both Thai and English and have later been translated into other languages, including Chinese, French, Spanish, and Italian. Some of his books, such as *Stillness Flowing* and *Without and Within*, are popular among foreigners who are interested in Buddhism and meditation. *Without and Within*, in particular, has been distributed in the rooms of several prestigious hotels in Thailand.

Ajahn Jayasaro's Dhamma teachings are disseminated through various digital mediums, including the website "Dhamma by Phra Ajahn Jayasaro," which was established under the Panyaprateep Foundation. Other digital channels include YouTube, Facebook, podcasts, and Instagram, all under the same name. He has currently amassed around 300,000 followers across these platforms. On YouTube alone, his lectures have garnered over 14 million views, totaling more than 3.8 million hours of listening time.

Additionally, in 2020, Ajahn Jayasaro was granted Thai citizenship as a special case by His Majesty the King, with the Royal Gazette stating that he had "played an important role in the propagation of Dhamma in Thailand and internationally... He is regarded to have made extraordinary contributions to Thailand and Buddhism" (unofficial translation of the Royal Gazette). In 2024, he was also bestowed the monastic rank of Phra Phrom Pacharayanmuni by His Majesty the King.

The Board of the Thailand Foundation deems it appropriate to present the 2024 Thailand's Public Diplomacy Award to Ajahn Jayasaro in acknowledgement of his distinguished and rigorous contributions to preserving and propagating Thai Theravada Buddhism globally. His efforts have sparked international interest in Buddhist teachings, leading many to travel to Thailand to study the Dhamma. Moreover, his work has helped promote international awareness of Thai identity, culture, and spirit through Buddhism, which is a major aspect of the way of life for the Thai people.

2. The Siam Society Under Royal Patronage

The Siam Society was founded in 1904 under the patronage of King Vajiravudh (then Crown Prince), and has received royal patronage from every Thai monarch ever since. For the past 120 years, The Society has been one of the leading institutions in the collection of knowledge in the fields of art, culture, sociology, anthropology, and history of

Thailand and Southeast Asia. Its published research and writings have been widely cited in international academic circles. The Society has also served as a hub for many prominent scholars in Thai and Southeast Asian studies, such as Phaya Anuman Rajadhon, David K. Wyatt, Sulak Sivaraksa, and Chris Baker.

The Society publishes two internationally recognized journals: The Journal of the Siam Society (JSS), continuously published since 1904, with focus on humanities of Thailand and Southeast Asia; and The Natural History Bulletin of the Siam Society (NHBSS), with focus on Thailand's natural history. Both journals are available in leading libraries worldwide. Additionally, the Society has published several English-language books on Thai culture and history.

In its mission to preserve and expand knowledge, The Siam Society has provided a library where scholars can conduct research and advance knowledge on Thai and Southeast Asian culture and history. It has organized English-language study trips for foreigners living in Thailand, offering guided visits to important historical sites across the country. The Society also holds regular academic and cultural lectures, averaging 25 to 30 events annually, and hosts monthly cultural performances.

In terms of international collaboration, The Society established the Siamese Heritage Trust (SHT) in 2011 to safeguard Thailand's cultural heritage, and thus working closely with like-minded international institutions. It has represented Thailand in international conferences such as the Pan Asia Conference on “Heritage Protection: The Asian Experience” in 2019. Besides, The Society is also a founding member of the Southeast Asian Cultural Heritage Alliance (SEACHA), serving as its Secretariat from 2019 to 2024. Additionally, the Society's Council Minutes from 1904 to 2004 were inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World International Register in 2013, underscoring its long-standing contributions recognized by international organizations.

The Board of then Thailand Foundation deems it appropriate to present the 2024 Thailand's Public Diplomacy Award to The Siam Society in recognition of its enduring and significant role in preserving and promoting Thai cultural heritage over the past 120 years. Through its efforts in compiling and sharing knowledge about Thai art, culture, and history with the international community, continuously fostering research, and serving as a bridge for people-to-people relationships across cultures and institutions, The Siam Society has greatly

contributed to raising global awareness of Thai culture and history. It has also strengthened Thailand's role in the academic landscape of Southeast Asia.

3. Mr. Somtow Sucharitkul

Mr. Somtow Sucharitkul, penname S.P. Somtow, is a distinguished Thai artist with a half-century career that includes music, film, and literature. He is a renowned figure in the arts in the international community as well as in Thailand. His international music career began at the age of 19 when he co-wrote and conducted the “Holland Symphony” in honor of the jubilee of HM Queen Juliana of the Netherlands, which was broadcasted on national Dutch TV. Mr. Somtow's compositions often combine Thai and Western sonorities in innovative ways. His operas, for example, include adaptations of Thai subjects, such as *Madana* (an adaptation of *Matthanaphatha* by His Majesty King Vajiravudh), *Mae Naak*, and the 10-opera *DasJati* series. He has also been a guest conductor in many countries and has taken his own orchestra on tour across four continents, performing in prestigious venues like Carnegie Hall in New York and the Musikverein in Vienna.

In the film industry, Mr. Somtow has gained recognition as a screenwriter, from working with Disney Animation in the 1990s to producing, composing the soundtrack, and writing the screenplay for *The Maestro: Symphony of Terror* (2021), which has won over 40 international awards. He also served as a musical consultant on *Tár* (2022), a film nominated for six Academy Awards.

In the literary field, Mr. Somtow has published over one hundred books under the pseudonym S.P. Somtow and was one of the first Thai writers to break through in the commercial English language publishing industry in the West. His works have been translated into more than a dozen languages. His books were published by major publishers like Penguin, Simon and Schuster, Berkley, Gollancz, and Atheneum. His novel *Jasmine Nights* was a GCSE English text and was a best-seller from Penguin, while the novel *Wizard's Apprentice* is cited as a source of correct usage in the Oxford English Dictionary.

These works demonstrate that Mr. Somtow is a Thai artist who has achieved tremendous success across multiple fields and is widely recognized by the global community. In 2023, he was honored with the title of National Artist in the field of music and contemporary composition, in recognition of his efforts to present and promote Thai culture and art internationally through Western art forms and his celebrated status as a world-class artist.

The Board of the Thailand Foundation thus deems it appropriate to present the 2024 Thailand's Public Diplomacy Award to Mr. Somtow Sucharitkul in recognition of his role in promoting Thai identity and showcasing the talents of Thai artists through his work in music, film, and novel writing, he has gained widespread recognition and admiration internationally for over 50 years.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Thailand Foundation will announce the time and details of the TPDA2024 Award Presentation Ceremony at a later date.



Infographics