JUN 8 - 1940

...R OF THAILAND

...F MANY SUBJECTS.

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...monthly meeting between ...Luang Pibulsaong... ...atives of local news... ...held yesterday afternoon at ...Palace when His Ex... ...a resumé of the various ...which the Government is ...gaged. Incidentally he des... ...observations he had made ...journey to the Southern ...and emphasized that as a ...he was now in a better ...appreciate what was lack... ...areas to bring them up to ...Bangkok.

...mier re-emphasized that ...did not intend to take any ...war which was now going ...and was more concerned ...elopment of the country, ...industry and the progress ...

...RECENT TOUR.

...his tour the Premier said ...made many notes and he ...in one of those in the ...he had in view. He ...a great deal remained ...bring those areas to the ...Bangkok especially in ...field. One thing had im... ...forcibly and that was that ...the south seemed to be ...those living in some ...He based this assumption ...that their homes seemed ...more solidly, were well ...kept in a better condition. ...said he started his tour ...Khirikhan and stopped ...on the way, but he was ...the provinces on the ...such as Phuket, Ranong, ...also meant launch con... ...his tour he had sought ...personal contact with the ...homes rather than ...at Government offices ...ve centres. He also ...of his time in the ...he was of the opinion ...of children indicated ...in which they lived.

...BATTALIONS.

...the lack of a suffi... ...ary force in those ...ed to raise six new ...ces in the southern ...battalions would be ...Trang, Songkhla, ...Nakhonsrit, etc. ...ary reservists had ...y for voluntary ...battalions.

A NEW DEPARTMENT.

His Excellency gave the information that the Ministry of Interior was organizing a new Department to be known as the Department of Public Welfare. Its duty would be to revive and maintain the old culture of the Thai people, raise the standard of intelligence, and of living, and to make arrangements for the evacuation of people from highly congested areas to new areas which would be developed from time to time. The Ministry of Finance was now busy with the task of finding the appropriate budget allotment for this new Department.

As regards the holding of manœuvres His Excellency expressed a desire that such should be held especially since no manœuvres had been carried out since the change over in the administration, *i. e.* 1932.

POLITICAL PARTIES.

Turning to the question of the formation of political parties the Premier stated that the Committee was still considering the draft of the Bill. One of the principles of the Bill would be the control of the activities of the leaders of any parties which were to be formed and there would also be provisions limiting the number of members and stating the minimum age of membership and the educational qualification necessary for admission to such membership. He was of the opinion that at the commencement there should only be three political parties, but no such thing as extreme right or extreme left parties would be allowed.

THAILAND IN EUROPE.

His Excellency next talked about the war in Europe and stated in this connection that His Majesty the King had decided definitely to remain in Switzerland till such time as it became necessary to evacuate to some other country. The Government had twice suggested that His Majesty and the Royal family should proceed to the south of France, America or return to Thailand, but His Majesty preferred to remain where he was. The Thai Legation quarter in Paris would be evacuated to some other area as soon as the necessity arose. Diplomatic custom made it necessary that Ambassadors or Ministers of countries represented in another country should remain at the headquarters of the Government of that country and therefore any move of the Legation would have to be to the same area as the French Government might establish itself.

(Continued at foot of previous col.)

The Premier mentioned that most of the Thai students had been evacuated to a town on the Franco-Spanish border. He had received a letter from his son who was at Brussels during the German raid on that city. His son stated that he was awakened by the rumbling of what he thought were rather heavy lorries moving about the city and did not realize till the third bomb dropped that he was in the middle of a raid. He immediately dressed and left his quarters, leaving everything behind. Mom Sanitwong Seni, the supervisor of the Thai students in Belgium, had a very long ride on a bicycle from Brussels to Paris when the raid took place. His Excellency stated that he had received no news concerning his daughter nor any letter from her, but he thought that she was safe.

THAI SHIPPING COMPANY.

Dealing with the formation of the Thai maritime, coastal and riverine companies His Excellency stated that these services would be definitely commenced on the 24th instant. The maritime company had bought three vessels of 5,000 tons each, two from America and one from Australia. The boats from America were now being loaded with fuel oil for Thailand. It was the Government's intention to re-name the boats after Thailand's heroines. The capital of these shipping services would be Tcs. 15 million, of which Government would hold 51 per cent of the shares and the remaining shares would be open to public subscription. These Companies would register on or about June 20th.

Concluding the interview which occupied nearly two hours His Excellency stated that the Government had no intention to break away from the Sterling group as far as the Thai was concerned.

JUN 8 - 1940

Enclosure no. 2 to despatch no.713 dated June 28, 1940, from the American Legation at Bangkok, Thailand, on the subject: "Prime Minister's Press Conference of June 7."

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THAILAND RECONSTRUCTION PROGRESSING DESPITE WAR

PREMIER OUTLINES GOVT.'S SHIPPING INDUSTRY PROJECT

POLITICAL PARTIES MAY BE ESTABLISHED SOON UNDER CONTROL EXPLAINED

H.E. Major-General Luang Bipul Songgram, the Premier, received representatives of the local Press yesterday afternoon and several topics of current national interest were discussed. The Press Conference was marked by the usual atmosphere of informality and the free and frank exchange of views.

Altogether editors and representatives of eighteen local newspapers were present at the conference. H.E. Phai Vilas Osathanonda, Director General of the Publicity Department and a few high officials of the Department were also present during the interview. H.E. the Premier appeared to be in much better health after his recent tour of the provinces.

His Excellency, at the outset, expressed his regrets over the untimely death of Nai Charoen Visithsarn, Editor of the Thai Nasdr, who used to attend the conferences and was personally known to the Premier. The business of the day was then taken up, with questions asked by the press men, promptly followed by the Premier's answers.

Asked about his recent tour of the various provinces, the Premier stated that it was not an inspection tour, but a tour undertaken for a general survey of the conditions prevailing. He had occasion to visit some of the central and northern provinces before proceeding to the south, where he visited nearly all the provinces.

He was gratified to note the various aspects of progress and the successful undertakings in these provinces but he was far from satisfied, for there still remained much room for improvement and progress, which, he hoped, will be attained in years to come and in the meantime, there should be an understanding of efforts.

PUBLIC WELFARE DEPT.

Questioned regarding the rumour that the government was intending to establish a Department of Public Welfare, the Premier stated that the problem was [illegible]

the Ministry were appointed to study the problem.

A law was required to be promulgated authorising the establishment of this Department and at the present stage the Ministry of Finance was being consulted in matter concerning the finances of the Department, which was expected to devote it attention to promoting the cultural standard of the population and to undertake other work similar to that. All these tasks were now entrusted to the Changvad officials or other quarters and there was no any official party directly responsible, said the Premier.

RUBBER FACTORY

Asked about the rubber factory scheme, the Premier stated that a factory for the manufacture of rubber articles would shortly be established in Bangkok and a sum of one million ticals has already been sanctioned as the capital of the factory. He also asked the press to help inducing the general public to settle down in the South developing rubber plantation, which was a profitable undertaking.

ECONOMIC PROBLEM

Discussing the results of the work of the Committee to consider ways and means for the prevention of economic depression in Thailand, His Excellency stated that the Committee has generally agreed that means and ways should be found to reduce the imported goods. The Government would do its best in improving those articles which could be locally produced and at the same time adequate measures would be taken to ensure that those necessary goods which could not be locally produced would steadily be imported at a reasonable price. For example, recently the Public Health Department was granted a sum of one million ticals, which they would use in purchasing and stocking the various kinds of medicines which were necessary for use while attempts were also being made to establish a factory producing certain kinds of simple medicines locally.

TRANSPORT PROBLEM

Regarding the export problem, it was generally noticed that export trade was in some difficulty because of the dislocation of the external transport facilities and hence the Government's endeavour to overcome this difficulty by establishing the Thai Shipping Co. Ltd., stated His Excellency. With a view to further facilitating the transport, the Government was also intending to establish two new companies, one for coastal service and the other for the river service, stated the Premier.

A sum of about fifteen million ticals was recently sanctioned as capital for these three companies, which are to be formed towards the middle of this month and forty-nine percent of the shares will be offered for sale to the general public while the Government will hold 51 percent of the shares.

THAI SHIPPING CO.

The first company was the Thai Shipping Company Limited, which would operate a service to China and other ports. H.E. Nai Vilas was sent to conduct negotiations for

for the purchase of 4 ships, at a cost of about 5 million ticals recently. Three of these ships were already named after ancient Thai heroines, namely Dep Kasattri, Sri Sundorn, and Suranaree and two of them will be loading oil for the Government from America to Bangkok on its first trip from America.

Asked about the personnel of the ships the Premier stated that at present Government intended to return the services of European captains while some Thai officers will be appointed to responsible positions on board so that they could gain valuable experience. The crew would also be composed of Thai seamen of other nationalties as well. H.E. Nai Vilas Osathanonda will be the Manager of this Company and the main office of the Company will be formally opened on June 24th, added His Excellency. The 4 ships purchased by the Company belong to the 5,000 tonnage class.

OTHER SHIPPING LINES

Another company to be formed will carry on the service with the ships and property of the Thai Navigation Co.,Ltd. recently purchased by the Government and it was named the Thai Coastal Service. The third was that owning the motor launches and vessels of the Siam Steam Packet Co.Ltd. which will operate in the River and these two companies will be under the direction of H.E. Luang Sindhu Songgramjai, stated the Premier. With the usual facility for external transport well linked with the internal transport, he believed that the existing difficulty as regards the export of the country would be effectively remedied.

TROOPS FOR THE SOUTH

Asked about the recent calling of volunteers who are reserve soldiers and sailors, the Premier stated that it was the intention of the Government to establish some six more battalions in the Southern provinces, namely, at Pattani, Trang, Chumporn and Nagorn Sridharmraj.

It was planned to stage a general defence manoeuvre late this year, the first to be held after the change of regime, stated the Premier.

PARTY POLITICS

Asked about the control to be imposed on political parties, the Premier stated that at the present moment, it was intended to control especially the leader of the party, the qualifications of the members, etc. Adequate measure would also be taken to ensure that no financial assistance would come from alien or other questionable sources, stated the Premier. The number of parties allowed to be established will be also limited and those with moderate aims only will be tolerated while those of the extreme views will not be permitted.

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Whatever the trend of the War in Europe and whatever the nature of its repercussions abroad, Thailand is firmly determined to persue her policy of strict and impartial neutrality as hitherto.

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This reassuring statement was made by H.E. the Premier in the course of the press conference held at the Suan Kularb Palace yesterday.

During these difficult and uncertain days, declared the Premier, it is the urgent desire of the Government to carry on the task of reconstruction to the best of their ability and to avert the economic effects of the war as far as possible. Efforts are already underway in this direction and the cooperation and assistance of the general public are essential for their success.

Discussing the war in Europe, the Premier stated that no further information had been received from His Majesty the King, it being understood therefore that the Royal Party is still at Lausanne. Preparations to render all possible assistance in case His Majesty and members of the Royal Family decided to leave Lausanne had already been made at the instructions of the Government.

Asked whether or not the Government had sent any instructions for the removal of the Thai Legation at Paris to somewhere else, the Premier replied that such a move, if necessary, would be undertaken at the discretion of the Minister. Some officials of the Legation were already staying at a seaside resort near the Spanish frontier, while the Minister and some other officials are still in Paris.

The Premier said that of the three students who were reported to have been missing in Belgium, two have already been located, while efforts are made to find the whereabouts of the other. He related the experiences of his son, a student at Brussels, who managed to escape to Paris after travelling for eight days. The Military Attache in Paris, who went to Brussels by train to look for the missing students, said the Premier, was compelled to return to Paris by bicycle. The Premier said that he did not receive any news from his daughter who is studying in Paris.

Though he felt sorry for the students and officials for the hardships they have to face during these days, he was glad that the experience thereby gained would prove useful to them in their life struggle.

Asked regarding certain rumours current in the local market, the Premier stated that the Government has no intention to remove the reserve funds of the Government from the Bank of England to the United States; there was no intention to link the Tical with the American Dollar and the Tical will remain linked to the Pound Sterling, he emphasised.

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