
Interview: Samak Sundaravej

Thai politician looks to high-growth future

The following interview with Samak Sundaravej, leader of the Thai Citizen Party, was conducted by Pakdee Tanapura of the EIR Paris Bureau in Bangkok in March just after the dissolution of the Parliament.

EIR: You are accused of supporting the military proposal for the amendment of the constitution. Do you have any comment on this?

Samak: I want a stable government. Next year we will have to decide on lots of investments like those for the eastern deep port, the construction of a new airport, gas separation factories, etcetera. If the government were to be unstable over three to six months, nobody would want to invest in Thailand. I would like to have a full democracy, but given that the future looks so unstable, the presence of the military would help to stabilize the situation.

As for the question of whether or not civil servants and the military should be allowed to play a part in politics, I would say yes, they should definitely have this right. Sometimes politicians cannot deal with certain social and economic problems. A civil servant often has the experience and will be readily able to deal with these problems. A high school graduate cannot become minister of health! We need to be flexible on these questions.

EIR: Certain media like the *Siamrath* of Kukrit Pramoj have been encouraging instability in Thailand and sabotaging development projects by manipulating public opinion. What do you think of Kukrit Pramoj?

Samak: Kukrit is an old politician. People around him are bad. He might not have bad intentions himself. If he is in the government, he may not oppose infrastructure projects. If environmentalists did not campaign against these projects, they would not have anything to do. The present government has tolerated these people too much. In fact, they should be sent into the jungle so that they would not be able to use Kukrit and his newspaper any more. These environmentalists are really insane. They even say that wallpaper can cause cancer. I've been staying in a house with wallpaper for more than forty years and I don't have cancer. These people are definitely mad.

EIR: If you become the next prime minister, what would you like to do?

Samak: I would increase both wages and prices, based on the inflationary rate index. Income in the countryside will also have to be increased. This can be done through the reduction of the number of peasants. Look at the United States: around three million Americans work in the agricultural sector, but they feed 200 million inhabitants. We have to have a bigger input of advanced technologies in the agricultural sector, which would reduce the cost of production. We also need a system of intergrated food industries to transform the agricultural surplus into semi-finished or finished products such as animal feed. With such industries, we can shift peasants into this sector and thereby increase their income by more than four times. These industries can be developed in the provinces and thus avoid congestion around the Bangkok area.

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In the meantime, we should use surplus such as animal feed to raise livestock in the countryside, which would raise the output of meat production in the country. If we can create a surplus of meat production, this can be exported internationally. Increased production would mean that we would be able to feed an increased number of population.

We should have nuclear plants, but the only obstacle would be the question of the site. Plants that leak are just too old. We have to have modern ones. As for solar energy, it seems to be good only for heating water. I have traveled around the world more than 10 times and I have seen a lot. If that is all it's good for, then we don't need it. Thai people don't like hot water except for making coffee. Nuclear energy is needed, and with cheaper electricity, we will be able to reduce the tax on gas and petrochemicals.