

His Majesty the King **still a** **guiding light** for Kingdom

MONARCH TO GRANT PUBLIC AUDIENCE; FIRST EVER PARADE OUTSIDE BANGKOK

THE NATION

TO MARK his 86th birthday today, His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej will grant a grand public audience at his Klai Kangwon Palace in Prachuap Khiri Khan.

A huge number of the much-revered monarch's well-wishers are expected to crowd the streets to express their continued deep loyalty to him.

This year, Thais' overwhelming respect for His Majesty has caught the world's spotlight, as even the serious confrontations between anti-government demonstrators and the Yingluck Shinawatra-led administration have come to a halt especially for this important occasion.

Both sides are now busy organising events to honour the much-beloved King.

His Majesty, accompanied by Her Majesty Queen Sirikit, will make a public appearance at the Rajapracha Samakhom Pavilion of Klai Kangwon Palace at 10.30am today.

HRH Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra, Parliament President Somsak Kiatsuranont, the supreme commander, and the chiefs of the armed forces will be present to express their well wishes.

His Majesty's public appearance will be televised.

Many giant screens are now installed at various spots in Prachuap Khiri Khan's Hua Hin district, as a huge number of people are expected to turn out in full force today to celebrate His Majesty's birthday.

Many people have been occupying the footpath along Phet Kasem Road in front of the Klai Kangwon Palace since yesterday.

Nattakan Sittikham, a Nonthaburi resident, said she had staked her claim to a space on the footpath yesterday morning.

"I have come here to honour my much-beloved King. I love him so much because he is so devoted to his country and his people," said the 60-year-old woman.

Pattarin Obchoey, 44, said that she, her family members and friends had travelled from as far away as Nakhon Pathom because they wished to express their loyalty to the King.

"We needed to come early because we were worried that all the space would be quickly occupied," she said yesterday.

Prachuap Khiri Khan Governor Weera Sriwathamatrakoon said that a portion of the road would be closed to traffic from 3am today to ensure there was more space for well-wishers.

"It should be able to accommodate tens of thousands of people," he said.

This will be the first time His Majesty has granted a grand public audience from Klai Kangwon Palace.

Light decorations and decorative plants are adorning the area.

Meanwhile, when asked by Bangkok Poll what they wanted to tell His Majesty, about 42.4 per cent of

respondents said they loved him, while 29.4 per cent said they wished him good health and a long life. Another 9.2 per cent said they revered His Majesty.

Democrat Party leader Abhisit Vejjajiva said the respite between the government and the anti-government demonstrators was solid proof that the monarchy was truly Thailand's unifying force.

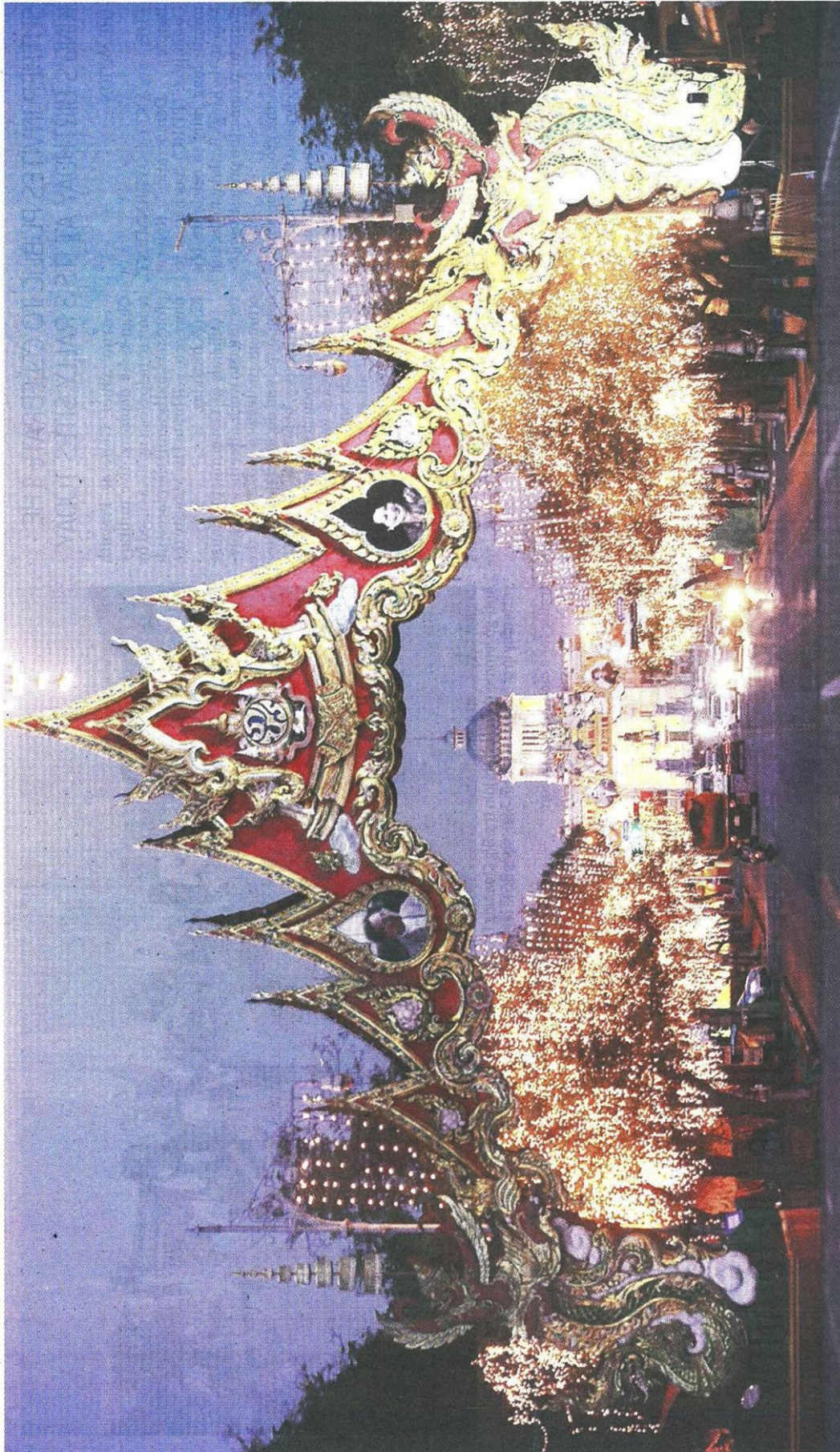
The protest leaders are former Democrat MPs. Yingluck said the anti-government protesters planned to hold

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an event in honour of His Majesty at Government House.

She said she would lead the candlelit ceremony in honour of the King at Sanam Luang, which will start shortly after 7pm tonight.

Several heads of state have already sent their best wishes to His Majesty on the occasion of his birthday. Among them are Britain's Queen Elizabeth II and US President Barack Obama.



An exquisite arch is erected at Rajdamnoen Avenue, with the Ananta Samakhom Throne Hall in the background, to mark His Majesty the King's birthday today.