

Closing Address

at the First International Olympiad on
Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA 2007)
Lotus Pang Suan Kaew Hotel, Chiang Mai
Saturday, 8 December 2007

Mr. Viboon Sanguanpong, Governor of Chiang Mai Province,
Professor Sakda Siripant, Chairman of the Organizing Committee,
Professor Pongsak Angkasith, President of Chiang Mai University,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,



It gives me great pleasure to join you here today at the closing ceremony of the **1st International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA 2007)**. First and foremost, I hope all the participants had an enjoyable and rewarding time during the past week.

As Minister of Education responsible for overseeing education in Thailand, let me say that the Royal Thai Government fully supports the objectives and activities of the **International Science and Mathematical Olympiads** in promoting participation, cooperation and networking amongst students and educators in scientific disciplines worldwide.

We are greatly honoured that Thailand and the city of Chiang Mai have had this opportunity to host this inaugural **Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics**. Science education has a very high priority here in Thailand and high-profile international events such as this help to showcase how science can contribute to the development of society.

Of course, the focus of any Olympiad is on the young people of the world who have already shown that they have a special talent. The young boys and girls who have been brought together here this week are part of the elite of their country's scientists of the future. It is right that their special talents should be recognized and encouraged by events such as this.

The language of science is a global one and advancement in science is based on collaboration, often between scientists in different countries. I therefore hope that the young scientists gathered here for this Olympiad have taken this special opportunity to broaden their knowledge and experience, exchange ideas, and make new friendships which may lead to scientific collaborations in the future.

As we move towards a knowledge-based society, the role of education in a country's social, cultural and economic development has never been more important. So many of the conflicts and injustices in the world today could be solved through better education. To receive an education is the right of every child and yet many children around the world are still deprived of that right. To the young people in this Olympiad, I would say, spare a thought for those less fortunate than yourselves and use your talents to help make the world a better place.

This Olympiad may be a forum for competition but, in fact, that is only its short-term purpose. It also has the long-term purposes

mentioned previously of stimulating new ideas, broadening horizons, and establishing lasting contacts. In the era of the 'Internet', there is still no substitute for actually meeting people face-to-face and getting to know them personally.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It remains for me to applaud all the participants on successfully completing a rich and most rewarding programme of activities-academic, cultural as well as social. For the prize winners, please accept my sincere congratulations. And for the other participants, I would like to say that trying ones best is a high reward in itself which deserves commendation.

My warmest thanks go to the team leaders for your efforts in the preparation of the teams represented here. In addition to the Organizing Committees, the presence of the participating teams is essential to this event. Please accept my sincere appreciation for all your hard work.

In closing, may I wish you all safe and pleasant journeys back home. I very much hope you will be taking with you happy memories from your stay in Chiang Mai and Thailand. May your lives be blessed always with happiness and success in whatever you do. With these remarks, I declare the First International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics closed.

Thank you.