

15 March 2021

English

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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names**

**Second session**

New York, 3 – 7 May 2021

**Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda\***

**Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries  
and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names**

**National Report of Thailand on Geographical Names  
for the period of 2019-2020**

Submitted by Thailand\*\*

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\* GEGN.2/2021/1

\*\* Prepared by The Thai National Committee on Geographical Names

The National Report of Thailand will be covered activities from 2 agencies which are the member of the Thai National Committee on Geographical Names namely the Royal Thai Survey Department and the Department of Provincial Administration that can be concluded as follow:

### **1. Activities of the Royal Thai Survey Department**

The Royal Thai Survey Department is the main agency and the secretary of the Thai National Committee on Geographical Names and is responsible for collaborating and coordinating the operation of the Thai National Committee on Geographical Names.

#### **Background**

The Thai National Committee on Geographical Names was established in 1992 in order to consider and set the same standardizations of Geographical Names in national and international levels. The United Nations has decided to urge its members to establish the national agencies which have authorities and duties to take responsibilities for the standardization of Geographical Names.

The Thai National Committee on Geographical Names is comprised of experts and delegates from 14 agencies and is chaired by the Director of Royal Thai Survey Department. The First Meeting was held in 1989 with the purposes of furthering work progress, considering and adopting the operating results of the Thai National Sub - Committee on Geographical Names.

The Thai National Sub - Committee on Geographical Names is appointed by the Thai National Committee on Geographical Names comprised of experts and 20 delegates from related field and this committee is chaired by Dr.Kanchana Kanchanawan. Its function is to consider and propose the considered Geographical Names to the Thai National Committee on Geographical Names for its approval.

The Royal Thai Survey Department Activities on Geographical Name for the period of 2019-2020 are as follow:

#### **1. Activities in 2019**

The 17th Meeting of the Thai National Committee on Geographical Names was held on 24th May 2019 at the Royal Thai Survey Department with the purposes of following up work progress, considering and approving the operating results of the Thai National Sub - Committee on Geographical Names and other relevant topics regarding Geographical Names which can be concluded in the following:

1.1 Requesting for authorization of the list of the Geographical Names of the 361 islands, which have been approved by The Thai National Committee on Geographical Names to be declared in the Royal Thai Government Gazette for the uses in both private and public sectors, as well as the use of the identified Geographical Names in publication and etc. for the sake of the same national standard of the Geographical Names. The meeting has assigned the delegates to check the spelling of the Geographical Names to be romanized in accordance with the romanization principle as well as to re-examine the location data in case it may cause some errors after the official declaration in the Royal Thai Government Gazette.

1.2 Examining the correctness of the 323 Geographical Names of the islands which have been approved from the Thai National Committee on Geographical Names Meeting but haven't declared in the Royal Thai Government Gazette yet because there still have had some arguments regarding dialect names or location.

1.3 Planning and preparing pattern of geographical data for considering and publicizing the approved Geographical Names in the future in order that the users can access the information easily and quickly.

## 2. Activities in 2020

Due to the increasingly severe spread of the coronavirus covid-19 pandemic in Thailand which cause the Working Committee unable to hold the meeting normally and in order to follow government's physical distancing policy so the Director of the Thai National Committee on Geographical Names has made a decision to cancel the Thai National Committee on Geographical Names Meeting and the Thai Sub-Committee on Geographical Names Meeting in 2020.

### **2. Activities of the Department of the Provincial Administration, Ministry of Interior**

Department of Provincial Administration is responsible for the provincial administration and the jurisdictional administrative boundaries of province, district, sub-districts and village.

During 2019 – 2020, the Department of Provincial Administration has updated the names and Romanization of the names of provinces, districts, sub-districts of Thailand, totally 76 provinces, 878 districts, and 7,255 sub-districts. It has worked closely with Thai Proper Dictionary Committee and Thai Gazetteer Committee conducted by the Office of the Royal Society of Thailand to improve the database of names and romanization of the names of the provincial administrative units in accordance with the standards in the preparation of geographical names.

The Geography nomenclature of the provincial administrative units of Thailand is based on three important principles in order to comply with standards and validity as follow:

#### **Principle 1: Following the principles of official romanization system introduced by the Office of the Royal Society of Thailand**

The romanization of geographical names of provinces, districts and sub-districts of Thailand follows the principles of transcription of Thai characters into Roman script introduced by the Office of the Royal Society of Thailand to achieve the accuracy and standardization. Some significant improvements are following;

1.1 Traditional transcription is still seen in the names of the districts which are named after the King or the Royal Family, for example;

a. Vajira Barami District, Phichit Province: The Roman script has been changed to "Vajira Barami" (originally Wachirabarami). The district named after "Vajira", was derived from the name of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua when holding the royal title "His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn".

b. Galyani Vadhana District, Chiang Mai Province: It is the latest district which was recently established in 2009 to honor Her Royal Highness Princess Galyani Vadhana Krom Luang Naradhiwas Rajanagarindra. So, the name has been romanized as Galyani Vadhana.

c. Prachaksinlapakhom District, Udon Thani Province: The Roman script was changed to "Prachaksinlapakhom" (originally Prachak Sinlapakhom) in accordance with the name of the district named after Prince Prachaksinlapakhom.

1.2 Transcription of the names of the district and sub-district are duplicated when they have similar sound in Thai. These cause confusion in use. So, the Department of Provincial Administration has conferred with the Thai Proper Nouns Dictionary Committee and concluded as an exception for the names of the districts and sub-districts with the duplication in Roman characters (only those located in the same district and province). Those include Bang Sai District and Bang Saai District in Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya Province

and Mae Kha Sub-district and Mae Khaa Sub-district in Fang District, Chiang Mai Province. In order to make the Roman transcript different, exceptionally “aa” is used instead of the long vowel sound.

Province	Thai Script District	Thai Script Subdistrict	Old Transcription	New Transcription
Phra Nakhon Si Ayutthaya	บางซ้าย	บางซ้าย	Bang Sai	Bang Saai
	บางไทร	บางไทร		Bang Sai
Chiang Mai	ฝาง	แม่กะ	Mae Kha	Mae Kha
		แม่ท่า		Mae Khaa

Table 1: Changes to the names of districts and sub-districts that pronounce the similar sound in Thai and duplicate in Roman script

### Principle 2 : Focusing on dialects, history and participation of local residents in determining geographical names

The romanization of the names of the district and sub-districts is emphasized on the meaning and origins of the name, as each area is named after a narrative, history, cultural, tradition, and believe. Mostly, the administrative units in Thailand are named in dialects or habitual uses of the area, which may be different from the official language. The use of names in Thai language is based on the usage of the people in the area so the transcription has to be researched and inquired by local residents to determine the story and the origin of the name, for examples;

a. Pa Kho Sub-district, Kumphawabi District, Udon Thani Province: The Roman script has been changed to Pa Kho (originally Pakho) because the district's history was traced and found that it is a dialect word with a meaning on both syllables. Consequently, the Roman transcription is changed to reflect the history and dialect.

b. Ka Tong Sub-district, Yaha District, Yala Province: The Roman script has been changed to Ka Tong (originally Katong) Because story have been told by the village residents that a word that has been distorted from the original word and there are a meaning in both syllables. Therefore, the romanization is Tran scripted to reflect the narrative and language changes

c. **Chakkabok** Sub-district, Ban Khai District, Rayong Province: The Roman script has been changed to **Chakkabok** (originally Chak Bok) to correspond to the reading and the meaning of the dialect

### Principle 3: Implementation and dissemination

The Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA) has created “DOPA Directory Book of Provinces, Districts and Subdistricts in Thailand 2020” because the Department is the main responsible

agency for the jurisdictional administrative boundaries of Thailand. Therefore, it is necessary to create a standard database that is the primary source for other agencies to use the geographic name of the district and sub-district standard, especially for making geography maps

## Geographical Names of Districts and Sub-districts in Thailand

The Geographical Names of Districts and Sub-districts in Thailand include 76 provinces, 878 districts and 7,255 sub-districts can be downloaded as followings;

