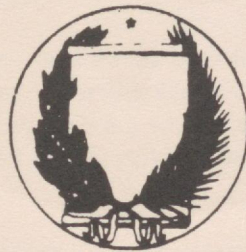


# *The Ramon Magsaysay Award*

**1991**

*Presentation Ceremonies*



*Saturday, August 31, 1991*  
*3:30 in the afternoon*  
*Main Theatre*  
*Cultural Center of the Philippines*  
*Manila, Philippines*

## *THE RAMON MAGSAYSAY AWARD*

### IN RECOGNITION OF GREATNESS OF SPIRIT SHOWN IN SERVICE TO THE PEOPLE

Ramon Magsaysay (1907-1957) was the third president of the Republic of the Philippines. Yet his life had great impact not only in his country but on many people in many lands. He was one of the outstanding leaders of our time.

Ramon Magsaysay commanded the admiration, respect and affection of people because he was a simple, humble man; because he cared for all people as individuals and believed in their dignity and importance; and because he had the courage of his convictions. His objective was to improve the lot of his countrymen and he approached the task with selfless devotion. He was convinced that government to last and to be sound must have integrity and reflect the will of the people.

A man of greatness of spirit, he saw his fellowmen born with the right to live in liberty and happiness. He angered at injustice and the violation of high principles. He worked to build a nation -- a world -- in which freedom could be enjoyed by all and man could live with man in honor and peace.

The world is richer and better because Ramon Magsaysay lived. His spirit will continue to be an inspiration. He exemplifies the highest type of leadership and as such is a source of strength and confidence to men everywhere who are sincerely concerned about the well-being of their fellowmen.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award, established in his honor to give recognition to those ideals which distinguished his life and the courageous service that he rendered to the people of the Philippines, seeks to acknowledge individuals and organizations in Asia whose contributions have enhanced this creative tradition.

## **THE 1991 RAMON MAGSAYSAY AWARDS**

### **Government Service**

**ALFREDO R.A. BENGZON**

*Filipino*

For his Courageous Demonstration that Urgent Social Goals,  
however Strongly Opposed, can be Achieved through the Machinery  
of Democratic Government

### **Public Service**

**HRH PRINCESS MAHA CHAKRI SIRINDHORN**

*Thai*

For Making her Royal Office an Instrument of Enlightened  
Endeavor for Thailand, and her Sparkling Embodiment of the  
Best that is Thai

### **Community Leadership**

**SHI CHENG-YEN**

*Taiwanese*

For Reawakening Taiwan's Modern People to the Ancient  
Buddhist Teachings of Compassion and Charity

### **Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts**

**K.V. SUBBANNA**

*Indian*

For Enriching Rural Karnataka with the World's Best Films and the  
Delight and Wonder of the Living Stage

### **International Understanding**

**PRESS FOUNDATION OF ASIA**

For Guiding Asia's Press to Look Beyond National Borders and  
Speak Intelligently to Complex Issues of Regional  
Change and Development

## PRESENTATION CEREMONIES

### NATIONAL ANTHEM

Philippine Army Band

### REMARKS

DIOSCORO L. UMALI  
*Chairman, Board of Trustees*

### READING OF CITATIONS

Members of the Board of Trustees  
Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation

### PRESENTATION OF MEDALS AND CERTIFICATES

H.E. CORAZON C. AQUINO  
*President of the Philippines*

### RESPONSES

The 1991 Ramon Magsaysay Awardees  
DR. ALFREDO R.A. BENGZON  
HRH PRINCESS MAHA CHAKRI SIRINDHORN  
SHI CHENG-YEN  
K.V. SUBBANNA  
PRESS FOUNDATION OF ASIA

### CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

H.E. CORAZON C. AQUINO  
*President of the Philippines*

### RECESSIONAL

Philippine Army Band

Ms. NONA B. JAVIER  
*Executive Trustee*  
Master of Ceremonies

At the conclusion of the ceremonies, guests are requested to stand and to remain standing until the President, the Awardees, and the Trustees shall have left the Auditorium. A reception follows in the Lobby.

## *Dr. ALFREDO R.A. BENGZON*

In the wake of a great political victory such as the one that toppled dictatorship in the Philippines in 1986, it is heroic to be in government. Buoyed by acclamation and euphoric hopes, many rally to the task. But it is different when the cheering stops, and when many old problems seem intractable after all. In the Philippines, as personal ambition, disillusion, and the frustrations of day-to-day problem solving took their toll of the original crusaders, ALFREDO R.A. BENGZON stayed the course.

Son of a distinguished jurist, BENGZON prepared at Ateneo de Manila and earned his medical degree at the University of the Philippines in 1961. Years of specialized training abroad followed. Returning to Manila in 1967, he established a practice in neurology and became a pioneer in managing medical services professionally.

Martial law made him a political man. In 1983 he quietly joined others to ponder how government could be recaptured for the people. Later he became part of the brains trust guiding Corazon Aquino's rise to power. After the EDSA Revolution he joined her cabinet.

As Secretary of Health, BENGZON now headed the Philippine's third largest government department. Using his well-honed management skills he launched a thorough reorganization, weeding out corrupt holdovers from the old regime to make way for honest talent from the ranks. By ending the institutionalized overpricing of medical supplies sold to his department by favored providers, he saved millions for essential operations. Meanwhile he emphasized public education -- noting that it costs less to prevent a disease than to cure one -- and mobilized support to make health a national priority.

"In the health sector," he said, "public welfare must have primacy over private interests." He therefore introduced his country's first generic drug law, giving Filipinos an alternative to costly brand name medicines. The counter attack by pharmaceutical companies and allies in the medical profession was angry and often personal. Secretary BENGZON stood his ground, following his own advice that, in government service, "one must always be willing to pay the price."

In a country where population has more than tripled since independence, BENGZON has committed the government to placing both the knowledge and the means for rational family planning in the hands of all Filipinos. Such a stand arouses opposition within the powerful Roman Catholic Church. But BENGZON insists his program meets compelling public health needs and that conscience alone should guide individuals in such intimate family matters.

Known for his acumen and discretion BENGZON has also been tasked by the president to guide sensitive negotiations between the government and its armed opponents as head of the Peace Commission. Until recently he was a key figure in formulating the Philippine position in critical military base negotiations with the United States.

As a social reformer determined to place government squarely on the side of the disadvantaged, BENGZON is persevering, pragmatic, and unfailingly positive. "Government is not merely a necessary evil," he points out, "it is the key to our life as a nation."

In electing ALFREDO R.A. BENGZON to receive the 1991 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Government Service, the Board of Trustees recognizes his courageous demonstration that urgent social goals, however strongly opposed, can be achieved through the machinery of democratic government.

## HRH PRINCESS MAHA CHAKRI SIRINDHORN

Not so long ago, to be royal was to be power itself, and grace and virtue. But no more. Although a regal aura yet clings to kingly names, of Asia's mighty dynasties few survive to reign or rule. And for most that do, respect and admiration are no longer automatic. They must be earned.

In this spirit HRH PRINCESS MAHA CHAKRI SIRINDHORN lives out her role as Crown Princess of Thailand. Born 36 years ago, she is a princess descended of many royal kings. Her Chakri ancestors saved Thailand for the Thais and built a modern state. Later they relinquished absolute power to pave the way for rule by law. From 1946 her father King Bhumipol has been his country's constant beacon, providing certainty that even as governments come and go Thailand will endure. These days PRINCESS SIRINDHORN is often at his side. Father and daughter are good company. They share a preference for simplicity and a limitless interest in the welfare of Thai citizens. "On and on," she once wrote in a poem, "I follow the quick steps of my Father."

Even so, PRINCESS SIRINDHORN has a presence all her own.

Embracing all things Thai she has become a force for cultural preservation. At her initiative dying handicraft skills are once again being passed from master to apprentice, classical Thai shadow plays rejuvenated, sacred temples restored, and classical works of music recorded for posterity. She herself plays several Thai instruments, preferring the *rañat-ék*, a solo wooden xylophone till now played exclusively by men. By singing and performing in public with Thais of all walks of life -- unthinkable for royal women of the past -- she has helped spur an unprecedented revival of traditional music.

Educated from grade one through her doctorate entirely in Thailand, PRINCESS SIRINDHORN's interests range from classical Asian languages to modern education. She mastered Remote Sensing Technology in 1984, a tool for studying Thailand's beleaguered environment. Today she teaches history at the Royal Military Academy. As an inveterate world traveler besides, she generates esteem for her country abroad. Travel books she writes become bestsellers, the proceeds from which she steers to needy children.

Indeed, of all things Thai most of all PRINCESS SIRINDHORN embraces children. Through a foundation she started many of Bangkok's orphans and unwanted children are cared for and find new homes, as do hundreds of refugee children through the Thai Red Cross, which she leads. Through her efforts, deaf and blind children throughout Thailand now have special schools, and thousands of pupils in remote border areas receive nutritious lunches and learn self-reliance by growing their own vegetables. Generous with her own purse, PRINCESS SIRINDHORN inspires generosity in others. Her projects are well funded and well managed. Moreover, to Thailand's children she is not a distant benefactor. She takes stock of their progress personally, visiting them everywhere she goes and giving them cheer.

Cheer is perhaps PRINCESS SIRINDHORN's most pervasive gift to all the Thais. They are cheered by her modesty, for she speaks softly and spurns ostentatious make-up and clothing. They are cheered by her seriousness, for she turns away from idle celebrity to devote herself to service. Not least they are cheered by her cheerfulness. In smiling PRINCESS SIRINDHORN Thais find an image of what they themselves aspire to be: a people moored happily in their traditions yet treading confidently in the modern world.

In electing HRH PRINCESS MAHA CHAKRI SIRINDHORN to receive the 1991 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service, the Board of Trustees recognizes her making her royal office an instrument of enlightened endeavor for Thailand, and her sparkling embodiment of the best that is Thai.

## SHI CHENG-YEN

Amidst their remarkable dash to prosperity, Taiwanese have learned that rapid economic development can exact a costly social price. In the giddy race to accumulate and spend, once cherished traditions governing family and social life often seem to lose their potency. The newly affluent grow callous, and indifferent to those left behind in the rush to better times or waylaid by disease or calamity. Yet by reminding Taiwanese of their Buddhist roots, SHI CHENG-YEN is stirring the public conscience and tapping a powerful force for good.

Touched by tragedy as a youth, she came early to spiritual awareness. More than once she tried to flee her mother's home in T'aichung to seek the religious life. Striking out for Taiwan's remote east coast at the age of 22, she succeeded. In the harbor town of Hualien she became a nun and immersed herself in Buddhist meditation and good works. In 1966, with five other women, she founded the Tzu-chi Buddhist Contribution Society.

Supporting themselves by sewing baby clothes and surviving on meager portions of tofu and rice, CHENG-YEN and her followers encouraged housewives to save their small change for charity and directed their donations to the city's poor. A simple temple complex built a few years later on land given by CHENG-YEN's mother became their permanent home. In time their selfless example and CHENG-YEN's impassioned exhortation to Buddhist teachings inspired others to give, and the Society flourished.

Toiling daily among Hualien's have-nots, CHENG-YEN was struck by the link between sickness and poverty. Loss of a breadwinner to illness or death could quickly reduce a family to penury, yet Hualien's rudimentary hospitals refused to treat anyone who could not pay. Moreover, Taipei's advanced hospitals were too far away for the timely treatment of complex cases. In 1979 she resolved to build a new hospital for Hualien. By then membership in the Tzu-chi Society had grown to tens of thousands and a hospital fund mounted rapidly. Opened in 1986, the Tzu-chi Buddhist General Hospital is staffed by some of Taiwan's best-trained doctors and is outfitted with state-of-the-art equipment. At CHENG-YEN's gentle urging, its patients are treated lovingly, as family. And it refuses no one; those who cannot afford its fees are readily assisted by the Society.

Today, CHENG-YEN and twenty-two disciples support themselves by candle making and follow an austere regimen of work and meditation. They take nothing from the Society. Every penny contributed is meticulously acknowledged and goes directly to support the Society's projects, making it Taiwan's most trusted charity. Indeed, well over a million people have now joined, and in 1990 alone they contributed some US\$ 22 million. Funds like these have enabled CHENG-YEN to add 250 rooms to the hospital and to assist more than 10,000 needy families and disaster victims each year. (When calamity strikes, her volunteers are often first on the scene.) Recently, she opened a nursing school where poor girls can learn a worthy calling. She now plans a full-fledged university for Hualien, plus a center for Buddhist culture. Indeed, through local branches island-wide, CHENG-YEN hopes eventually to bring modern hospitals and other services to places in need throughout Taiwan.

At the heart of CHENG-YEN's burgeoning empire is the simple message of love and care for fellow human beings. She urges donors to give not just money, but time -- time spent ministering directly to the poor and sick. Taiwanese of all stations, and numbering in the thousands, now do. Unfazed by her growing celebrity, the frail but tireless 54-year-old CHENG-YEN says simply, "I am led by the power of religion, which is immeasurable."

In electing SHI CHENG-YEN to receive the 1991 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership, the Board of Trustees recognizes her reawakening Taiwan's modern people to the ancient Buddhist teachings of compassion and charity.

## K.V. SUBBANNA

In recent years Asia's prosperous urbanites have discovered the rural arts. Handicrafts from villages now adorn their city homes. Meanwhile, polished versions of country dances and plays appear on television and grace official extravaganzas. Yet the finer elements of urban culture are rarely introduced to the village world, whose inhabitants are thought too unsophisticated to appreciate them. By introducing modern plays and films to rural folk in southern India, K.V. SUBBANNA is reversing this trend and making a powerful case for the universality of art.

The rural town of Heggodu is home to some 500 people in the Kannada speaking state of Karnataka. Areca and pepper gardens there provide members of the SUBBANNA family a comfortable living. But theater is their passion. In 1949 K.V. SUBBANNA's father formed the theater group Ninasam to stage venerable local favorites based on the Ramayana and Mahabharata. After taking a literary degree at Mysore University, SUBBANNA returned home and brought fresh ideas to Ninasam.

Under his leadership, its repertoire grew to include Kannada-language renditions of Shakespeare, Moliere and Brecht alongside new plays by Kannada playwrights, plays for children, and modern adaptations of classics from the Indian canon. With help from government he built a large local theater, a rarity in India. In it SUBBANNA introduced modern staging and lighting and regaled Heggodu's citizens with an array of plays unique in rural India. They liked what they saw and came back for more.

Ninasam's success led SUBBANNA to form the Ninasam Theatre Institute in 1980. In this "theater ashram," 15 students a year learn acting and other theater arts in a Gandhi-like atmosphere of simple living and hard work. An itinerant acting troupe formed from the Institute's graduates went on to perform Ninasam's potpourri of plays the length and breadth of Karnataka -- often in open-air theaters before crowds of 700 or more. Following Ninasam's example, and with its practical assistance, local theater companies are now coming to life in many rural districts.

Film followed theater. Ninasam began introducing film classics to Karnataka audiences in the 1970s. These days, participants in its annual film appreciation course view works of leading film-makers like Satyajit Ray, Ingmar Bergman, and Akira Kurosawa. By taking such films on the road alongside its stage plays Ninasam is bridging the gulf between urban and rural culture. India's democracy, SUBBANNA believes, demands cultural diffusion of this kind. Besides, he asks, "Why should the lost men in the corners of our country be denied the films of Satyajit Ray?"

Playing many parts in his time, SUBBANNA also crafts traditional Indian myths and tales into new plays that probe modern issues. As a publisher, he brings out new works by regional writers as well as his own poems and prolific translations of foreign movie scripts and books.

With financial prudence and a gift for bringing others into leadership, SUBBANNA has built Ninasam to last. Its headquarters in Heggodu boasts a library, rehearsal hall, guest house and office in addition to its famous theater. At 59, SUBBANNA says he now leaves most of the real work to junior colleagues, including his son Ashkara. But as one admirer has pointed out, self-effacing SUBBANNA carries on multiple projects "seemingly oblivious to the scale of his activities."

In electing K.V. SUBBANNA to receive the 1991 Ramon Magsaysay Award for Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts, the Board of Trustees recognizes his enriching rural Karnataka with the world's best films and the delight and wonder of the living stage.

## PRESS FOUNDATION OF ASIA

The mandate of the serious press is daunting under the best of circumstances. But it is even more difficult where, as in much of Asia, populations are linguistically diverse, farflung, and largely poor; where governments do not always welcome or protect the free flow of news; and where resources for production, fair pay and training are slim -- factors that tempt publishers to rely on brisk-selling sensationalism or links to special interests to pay the bills. Eager to surmount these impediments, Asian editors and publishers meeting in Manila in 1967 took a stand for professionalism in the regional press. Vowing jointly to make journalism a positive influence in the political and economic maturation of their societies, they founded the PRESS FOUNDATION OF ASIA.

At the heart of their endeavor was a realization that newspapers and the related media must rise above narrow preoccupations with individual countries and their politics, and seek to educate readers about the vast social and economic changes sweeping Asia. Under the leadership of Amitabha Chowdury of India and Tarzie Vittachi of Sri Lanka, the FOUNDATION, or PFA, introduced "development journalism" and directed regional journalists to issues like population, health, technology and the environment. They also dared look to the day when the Asian press itself, not powerful Western news agencies, would speak to the rest of the world for Asia.

Since that time more than two thousand Asian journalists have been trained in PFA-led workshops and seminars. Taking up the full range of development topics, these training exercises have helped young Asian journalists become literate reporters on matters such as agriculture, ecology and medicine, and taught them skills in photojournalism, high-tech printing, and cost effective management.

In a related endeavor the FOUNDATION launched Depthnews, a region-wide, development-oriented news service. Depthnews was the first exclusively Asian news and features service and in volume and range remains unique today. Its 45 correspondents generate stories used by some 300 regional newspapers and some 700 radio stations in 20 languages. More than two million people read Depthnews stories annually in their local newspapers. More than 50 million hear them over the radio. These days specialized Depthnews series take up the subjects of Science, Economics and Women. In the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, India and Bangladesh there are national series as well. Although commercial success has eluded Depthnews, its reputation for excellence and breadth in regional reporting has made it a model the world round.

Some 500 leading newspapers and broadcasting networks in Asia and the Pacific are now joined in PFA's membership. Moreover, separate national press institutes have risen in several countries in response to its example and active support. With a staff of 20 in Manila guided by Romeo Abundo, and under the direction of its longtime Director General Mochtar Lubis, the PFA today -- though often strapped for money -- steadfastly advances its essential programs and causes.

From the beginning, press freedom has been chief among these causes. Lamentably, publishing the truth remains a dangerous occupation in parts of Asia today. This is why, in 1987, the FOUNDATION once again pledged to raise its voice against governments that arrest journalists and shut down newspapers arbitrarily. It is not enough for the press to perform well and to prosper, says its credo. It must do so "while staying honorable."

In electing the PRESS FOUNDATION OF ASIA to receive the 1991 Ramon Magsaysay Award for International Understanding, the Board of Trustees recognizes its guiding Asia's press to look beyond national borders and speak intelligently to complex issues of regional change and development.

RAMON MAGSAYSAY AWARD FOUNDATION

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Ramon Magsaysay Center  
1680 Roxas Boulevard  
Manila, Philippines



**Agenda for the Magsaysay Awardees meeting at  
Madras on Wednesday, 11th September, 1991**

**Venue :** Board room of the Central Leather Research  
Institute, Madras - 600 025

Session I :

9.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. : Review of PAP - programmes of the past  
four years.

Implementation of the recommendations of  
the Bangkok Assembly of 1987.

1.00 p.m. - 2.00 p.m. : Working lunch

Session II :

2.00 p.m. - 4.00 p.m. : Review of methods through which the RM  
Awardees can play a greater role in promoting  
cooperation and understanding among Asian  
nations.

Harmonising environment protection and development  
- role of RM Awardees.

Session III :

4.30 p.m. - 6.30 p.m. : A panel of awardees together with Dean Umali  
and Nona Javier will address a large meeting  
of Universities scholars and the general public  
at the Vivekananda Auditorium of the Anna  
University.

8.00 p.m. : Dinner at the residence of Dr. & Mrs. M.S.Swaminathan