

# Primate Research Institute of Thailand (PRIT): Establishment and Its Roles in Medical Science Researches

SUCHINDA MALAIVIJITNOND

Primate Research Unit, Department of Biology, Faculty of Science, Chulalongkorn  
University, Bangkok, 10330, Thailand

Thailand occupies a geographically important area as it situates at the center of Southeast Asian countries, to connect mainland with island parts. Additionally, there are 14 species of primates, from prosimians (slow loris) to lesser ape (gibbon), in Thailand. At present, Thai cabinet and several concerned agencies recognize the importance of improvement of the quality of life, especially for the better health. They started supports for the research and development on medicinal plants or drug discoveries. However, most of the end-products from those researches could not go through the drug-level. They have been only in the level of food supplement, because no pre-clinical test using animal subjects is carried out. Furthermore, many emerging diseases have occurred and prevailed in Thailand in these recent years, such as SARS and Bird Flu, with many reminiscent tropical diseases, such as Malaria and Rabies which is proving the necessity of research on animal subjects. Respecting for these concerns with the long-term experience on primates for more than 30 years, Chulalongkorn University determines to establish "Primate Research Institute of Thailand (PRIT).

The goals of PRIT are 1)to produce the animal model for scientific research, especially for drug-testing for emerging diseases or tropical diseases or medicinal herb researches, 2)to be an information center on primates in Thailand, 3)to be a central hub of primate research among Southeast Asian countries, for both biomedical and fundamental biological researches on primates, and 4)to breed primates to supply various demands. To conform to these goals, three types of breeding and rearing system will be introduced to PRIT; closed system, semi-opened system and opened system, to serve on different kinds of researches. At the first phase three species of primates are being planned to be reared; marmosets (*Callithrix jacchus*), Indian-type rhesus macaques (*Macaca mulatta*), and Thai-origin long-tailed macaques (*Macaca fascicularis*). The PRIT will be constructed at Kangkhoi District, Saraburi Province (110-km north of Bangkok). There are many advantages of this site; 1)close to Bangkok (especially a new airport), 2)wide area and separated far from the human settlement or municipal/urban areas, 3)good transportation, 4)appropriate physical and biological environment, 5)large water reservoir which can supply water and electricity, and 6)it is a property of Chulalongkorn University own. For the preparation of concrete plan, we would ask for advices from Tsukuba Primate Research Center (TPRC), Japan, Southwest National Primate Center (SNPRC), San Antonio, and Primate Research Institute (PRI), Japan.