United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan yesterday presented His Majesty the King with a lifetime achievement award in recognition of the global relevance of his call for a sufficiency approach to development. Mr Annan presented the United Nations Development Programme's first Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award at Klai Kangwon Palace in Prachuap Khiri Kan.

"If human development is about putting people first, there can be no better advocate for it than His Majesty," Mr Annan told a panel discussion at the Foreign Ministry.

"As the world's 'Development King', His Majesty reached out to the poorest and the most vulnerable people of Thailand, listened to their problems, and empowered them to take their lives into their own hands," Mr Annan said.

The King's "visionary thinking" helped shape global...
"His Majesty's 'sufficiency economy' philosophy _ emphasising moderation, responsible consumption and resilience to external shocks _ is of great relevance to communities everywhere during these times of rapid globalisation," he said.

"The philosophy's 'middle path' approach strongly reinforces the United Nations' own advocacy of a people-centred and sustainable path toward human development," Mr Annan added.

In presenting the award, Mr Annan said the King had made an "extraordinary contribution to human development".

With the award, the UN hoped to "further promote the invaluable experiences and lessons learned from Your Majesty's development endeavours, and help draw attention to Your Majesty's visionary thinking beyond the borders of the Kingdom of Thailand".

Mr Annan flew in to Thailand to confer the award on the King on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of his accession to the throne.

At the Foreign Ministry discussion, Privy Council chairman Prem Tinsulanonda said the King's philosophy had helped strengthen the country's moral fibre by promoting honesty and integrity.

"The 'Working Monarch's' guidance is that there is no quick fix for any problem. We need to rely on ourselves first and in identifying problems and choosing solutions, we have to make the choice wisely," Gen Prem said.

The King recognised the importance of knowledge from the outside world, Gen Prem said "but we should be more selective in what we seek to embrace".

Chirayu Isarangkura na Ayudhaya, Grand Chamberlain and director-general of the Bureau of the Crown Property, said the country still needed the King's "visionary philosophy" to chart the way forward even though he had brought improvements in health and infrastructure facilities and water management over the past 60 years.

The King has initiated over 3,000 projects across the country, each tailored for specific localities, and encouraged local communities to persevere in self-help programmes, he told the forum.

The sufficiency philosophy, Mr Chirayu added, has been drawn from decades of close observation and steady accumulation of knowledge from six "study centres" set up to conduct research and produce knowledge applicable to local conditions.

"Sufficiency means moderation, reasonableness and resilience in the face of rapid changes," he said.

"Knowledge should be applied with prudence, and moral
values such as integrity, patience and perseverance are necessary to give rise to sufficiency."

The concept was as much applicable to the largest industrial conglomerate as to the smallest, most remote village, he said.

Pim Totankum, a 49-year-old farmer from Sakon Nakhon, recited three poems in praise of the sufficiency principle.

Klon Poh Luang speaks of the King as a model for Isan people. Klon Rai Na Suan Phasom and Klon Phak Suan Krua Rua Kin Dai advocate mixed farming and vegetable planting, respectively.

A widow with three children, Mrs Pim started implementing the sufficiency principle in 1999 after learning it from Khien Srimukda, leader of the Inpaeng Network, in Sakon Nakhon province.

"The King's sufficiency economy philosophy has changed my life," she said. No longer in debt, she now has a sustainable living and has sent her two younger children to university.

Deputy Prime Minister Surakiart Sathirathai said Thailand's promotion of human development via using the "sufficiency economy" philosophy would be the theme of the UNDP's National Human Development Report for Thailand next year.