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Thailand Younger Chemists Network

Thailand's first initiative to create bonds among early-career chemists across institutes

by Chanat (Jay) Aonbangkhen

Inspired by the International Younger Chemists Network (IYCN), the European Young Chemists' Network (EYCN) of the European Chemical Society (EuChemS), and the Malaysian Young Chemists Network (MYCN), **Thailand Younger Chemists Network** (TYCN) was successfully inaugurated in 2023, making it the first early-career chemists networking platform in Thailand, initiated by the Chemical Society of Thailand (CST).

TYCN is a network of chemical science professionals, based in Thailand, working together to empower early-career chemists in Thailand through vibrant networking, mentorship, and professional development opportunities, catalyzing collaborations and research advancements in diverse fields of chemistry for a sustainable future, both locally and globally endorsed by the Chemical Society of Thailand (CST). With the enthusiastic support from the CST board committee, especially our project advisors (Supawan Tantayanon, Vudhichai Parasuk, and Supa Hannongbua) and the leadership of Chanat Aonbangkhen (the Chair and Co-founder of TYCN), TYCN was successfully launched at Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai, as a part of PACCON 2023 (Thailand's Pure and Applied Chemistry International Conference). Joining the launch in 2023

was Torsten John, the chair of IYCN, and in 2024, the IUPAC Past-President, Javier García Martínez.

Prior to the official launch, a group of young chemists in Thailand was already nucleated by the CST as a hub of young talents in Thailand.

TYCN first activity was participation in the organization of Small-Scale Chemistry laboratory in September 2022 at KSL River Kwai Park & Resort in Kanchanaburi province, Thailand, which is a chemistry summer camp for high school students and teachers across Thailand. The camp provided a hands-on experience for over 200 participants to learn various experiments using miniature and easily-accessible chemistry educational kits developed by Supawan Tantayanon and the CST team. Through a rally across the naturistic park, participants learned about renewable resources, alternative energy sources and locally sourced produces. The camp also emphasized the importance of sustainable chemical processes and its impact on the environment by encouraging them to think critically about the role of chemistry in creating a more sustainable future and exploring how chemistry can be used to address environmental challenges, such as pollution and waste management. This summer camp was sponsored by both public and private sectors, including Dow Thailand Group, Khonkaen Sugar Industry PLC, and the Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC), Ministry of Education.

TYCN team comprises a growing number of chemists from diverse backgrounds and different institutions around Thailand such as Chulalongkorn University, Chiang Mai University, Chulabhorn Royal Academy, Chulabhorn Research Institute, Chulabhorn Graduate Institute, Kasetsart University, KhonKaen University, Prince of Songkla University, Silpakorn University, Vidyasirimedhi Institute of Science and Technology (VISTEC), and professionals from the chemical industry, such as Merck Thailand Company Limited.

With the core missions to empower early-career chemists and promote research for a sustainable future, the team has successfully hosted the 1st Merck-CST-TYCN Symposium in 2023 (at Mae Fah Luang University, Chaing Rai) and the 2nd Merck-CST-TYCN Symposium in 2024 (at BITEC Hall, Bangkok), thanks to the CST and Merck Thailand Company Limited, for the generous financial support, and also GibThai and VFoods Company for the grand opening gifts at the symposium.

During the symposium, three key events were organized:

- Merck-CST-TYCN for Sustainable Future Award Talk
- TYCN Rapid-Fire Talks
- TYCN Panel Discussion

Merck-CST-TYCN for Sustainable Future Award is the award for distinguished young chemists whose innovative work has significantly contributed to a sustainable future, based on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Merck-CST-TYCN for Sustainable Future Award Talk offers the chance for the award recipients to talk about their works and inspires other chemists to work towards a sustainable future using chemistry. The previous recipient of this award in 2023 was Chayasith Uttamapinant (VISTEC), who worked on the engineering of a polyethylene terephthalate hydrolase from the human saliva metagenome. This year the award was given to Thanthapatra Bunchuay (Mahidol University) who worked on supramolecular

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chemistry approaches to design functional materials for sustainable development.

TYCN Rapid-Fire Talks seminar invited new early-career chemists to network by sharing their research interests with the audience in an expeditious fashion within 1-3 minutes. Over the past two years, Thai graduate students, researchers, and new lecturers from different institutes in Thailand (*e.g.* Chulalongkorn University, Chulabhorn Research Institute, VISTEC, Silpakorn University, Chiang Mai University, Prince of Songkla University, Walailak University) and students and postdocs from abroad (MIT, the University of Cambridge, etc.) have also participated.

For the highlights, the TYCN Panel Discussion is a session where distinguished professionals shared their success stories and early-career advice with everyone in the TYCN symposium. Many outstanding chemists from Thailand and abroad have been invited to share their career wisdom. Distinguished scientists who have joined the panel discussion include David MacMillan (Nobel Prize Laureate in chemistry, 2021), Javier García Martínez (former IUPAC President), Pimchai Chaiyen (President of VISTEC), Tirayut Vilaivan (Vice Dean of Research, Faculty of Science, Chulalongkorn University), Poonsakdi Ploypradith (Expert Scientist, Laboratory of Medicinal Chemistry Chulabhorn Research Institute) and Anyanee Kamkaew (Head of the Chemistry Department, Suranaree University of Technology), as well as Sorathep Rattanayotsakun (Senior researcher at Siam Cement Group or SCG Company).

Today, TYCN serves as a vital platform, connecting Thai early-career chemists across different institutes, fields of chemistry, and industries, while providing crucial networking support for young chemists, facilitating seamless transitions into independent careers. Join us in forging a path of innovation and impact, shaping the future of chemistry both locally and globally!

Follow us at https://www.facebook.com/TYCN2022

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