

Niwano Peace Prize to be awarded to Thai Buddhist leader

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Tokyo, March 3 (ENInews)--The Tokyo-based Niwano Peace Foundation has announced it will award its 2011 Peace Prize to Sulak Sivaraksa, a Thai Buddhist leader.

The foundation said the presentation ceremony will take place in Tokyo on 19 May. In addition to an award certificate, Sulak will receive a medal and 20 million yen (US\$242,743). The foundation said Sulak is "a remarkable and multifaceted Buddhist leader whose work for peace is exemplified by courage, determination, imagination, and the constant inspiration of the core principles of his Buddhist faith."

It said that "Sulak has helped to change the views of political leaders, scholars, and young people in Thailand, Asia, and the world, encouraging a new understanding of peace, democracy, and development. He challenges accepted approaches that fail to give priority to poor citizens, men and women alike."

It said he has "over a lifetime of dedicated service and unflagging commitment, given new life to ancient Buddhist teachings about nonviolence and about peace and justice." Sulak's advocacy for the environment is another important reason to honor him, according to the foundation.

"He speaks forcefully against environmental destruction, promoting environmental preservation and environmental justice," the foundation said.

Sulak was born in 1933 in Thailand, to a family of Chinese ancestry. Educated in Thailand, England, and Wales in law and other disciplines. He returned to Bangkok in 1961. He has worked as a teacher, scholar, publisher, activist, and founder of many organizations. He has authored more than a hundred books and monographs in Thai and English.

The Niwano Peace Prize prize is awarded annually to a living individual or an organization that is making a significant contribution to world peace through promoting, interreligious cooperation. It was named after Nikkyo Niwano, the founder and the first president of Rissho Kosei-kai, a Tokyo-based international Buddhist lay organization, who saw peace as the goal of Buddhism.

Past Niwano Peace Prize recipients include former World Council of Churches general secretary Philip Potter (1986), the Rev. Gideon Byamugisha (2009), and Ela Ramesh Bhatt (2010).