

## SUKHAPIBAL LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

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### History

The first Sukhapibal (Sanitary Board) was organized in the Bangkok metropolitan area by Royal Decree in 1897 (B.E. 2440). Later, in the beginning of 1905 (B.E. 2448) King Rama V decided to place the experimental scheme of local self government at Tambol Tachalom, Smuthasakorn province. This scheme was partially successful. Then in 1908 (B.E. 2451), Sukhapibal local self government was organized throughout the country by the Acts of 1908 and 1915. After the revolution in 1932 (B.E. 2475) a Royal Decree was issued to elevate the status of the Sukhapibal to that of a municipality.

### Area

Until early 1953 (B.E. 2495), having realized its usefulness, the government decided to re-introduce the use of the Sukhapibal system by stipulating that communities which are the seats of District or Sub-District offices, or those with more than 100 shops and with a population of 1,500 or more will have a Sukhapibal status. At present, there are 405 Sukhapibals in all parts of the country. Three of these have become municipalities.

### Internal Organization

Unlike the municipality or Province, the Sukhapibal has no council. Its administration is in the hands of a board consisting of District officials and elected members, as follows:

1. The Local Chief District Officer (Nai Amphur) serves as the ex-officio chairman of the board.
2. One Deputy Chief District Officer (Palad Amphur) of the Amphur where in the Sukhapibal is located is appointed by the Provincial Governor.
3. The local police chief.
4. The treasurer (Samubanchi Amphur) of the Amphur.
5. The health officer of the Amphur.
6. Headmen of the villages (Kamnan) and of the hamlets (Phuyaiban) within the Sukhapibal area serves as ex-officio members of the board.
7. Four elected persons who are qualified to be Hamlet headmen (Phuyaiban) in the Sukhapibal area.

The purposes of organizing Sukhapibal local self-government is to encourage the people to participate in local affairs. It is the first step to train the people to know how to govern themselves. Sukhapibals will lead to the municipalities of the future.

The board has both executive and legislative functions.

As the executive body, the law concerning Sukhapibal prescribes that "The Sukhapibal board shall supervise and be responsible for the administration of the affairs of the Sukhapibal community within the limitation of the law and ministerial regulations". The officials who carry out the duties and responsibilities consist of the chairman of the board, acting as the chief executive, the Deputy chief district officer as the chief clerk, the Amphur treasurer as the board's treasurer, the Amphur health officer as the board's health officer, and many other employees. The law also requires that the board submit its plan of operation to the governor for approval.

As the legislative body, the law prescribes that; "The Sukhapibal board can enact bye-laws which are not contrary to the law". However, the authority to make bye-laws is limited within the scope of the duties and responsibilities prescribed in the Sukhapibal Act. The annual budget, for example, must be approved by the provincial governor.

The duties of the chief District officer can be seen from the law which prescribes that the chief District officer will act as the chairman of the board. The vice-chairman is elected from the board. As the chairman, he is responsible for supervising and carrying out the functions according to the law. By serving in two positions at the same time, he can have knowledge of the real needs of the people in his territory.

### Functions

The Sukhapibal shall be responsible for carrying out the following functions:

1. To provide and maintain water ways and local highways
2. To be responsible for the cleanliness of path-ways public places and to dispose of garbage.
3. To prevent and suppress epidemics.
4. To provide clean water, water works, markets, abattoirs, wharfs, ferrys, cemetery and crematoriums.
5. To provide and maintain public electricity.
6. To provide fire fighting equipment.
7. To provide and maintain hospitals or nursing homes.

of money for salaries of personnel and, thus, a large sum is saved for the improvement of local services. Most officials pay attention to local affairs, because they are free from political agitation which is common in the municipalities.

In comparison to the local self government in other countries, such as the United States of America, Great Britain, and France, the Sukhapibal is much less autonomous, resulting from the recent change from absolute monarchy to democracy with which the Thai people are not familiar, the Socio-economic structure, and the standard of education. Thai people participated less in local affairs than those of the countries mentioned above.

### **Evaluation**

#### ***Some advantages of Sukhapibal Government***

1. It is the best way to encourage the local people to take the initiative to improve their own communities and their standard of living.
2. It brings about more efficiency and economy in administration.
3. Co-operation between officials and people in communities provides a good demonstration for training the people to govern themselves in the future.

#### ***Some defects***

1. There is a low degree of autonomy and weak popular control. Decision-making and initiative comes from above rather than from below.
2. Members of the board, especially the chief clerk and the Sukhapibal treasurer have a lot of burdens, because they serve two functions.
3. Most officials lack knowledge and experience in administration such as;
  - (1) The budget making process.
  - (2) The process of law-making.
4. The Sukhapibal has insufficient revenues to perform the functions prescribed by law.

### **Recommendation**

1. People should be strongly motivated to participate in local affairs by:
  - (1) Trying to serve the basic needs of the communities.
  - (2) Using motivation techniques.
2. In-service training is needed for key positions.

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