



PROFILE

# At BCPG, the boss leads (and leans) by example

A slimmed-down Bundit Sapianchai brings personal energy to his company's efforts in renewable power. **By Yuthana Praiswan**

**A**<sup>88</sup>t 54, Bundit Sapianchai has tried to make himself healthier and stronger to perform as the top leader of BCPG Plc, the renewable power operator under Bangchak Corporation Plc. Mr Bundit is BCPG's president after climbing into the company's elite club in 2015. BCPG is spearheading the drive to develop renewable energy in Thailand.

In early 2018, the executive unveiled his transformation with a skinnier body and made a splash in the public eye.

The svelte new look translates to more efficient work. "It can also provide inspiration to my colleagues to follow this healthy trend," Mr Bundit says. "This top position means hard work and spending many hours at the office, so it made me consume too much food and become fatter."

He says he decided to begin a diet programme in mid-2017 as his flabbiness began to approach obesity status.

Moreover, he witnessed illness in his father, driving home a sense of his own mortality.

"My physician always tells me that phrase 'you are what you eat,' he says.

Mr Bundit has paid mind to his diet programme since then. He underwent a physical check-up at a wellness hospital and consulted with a well-known anti-ageing doctor, Tanupol Virunhagarun.

"Dr Tanupol recommended to me a pocket book titled 'What Menu to Commit Suicide,' as I needed to deeply understand food selection and I could find my most favourite dishes in that book," Mr Bundit says. "I was lucky for this decision, because I would have ignored my health and

lifestyle and eaten whatever I wanted. I would become a serious-illness patient and be such a heavy burden for my family."

His daily nutrition plan calls for consuming less carbohydrate, sugar, fat and alcohol, and skipping dinner. More importantly, he rides a stationary bike for an hour.

Six months into the programme, he had lost roughly 10 kilograms and noticed that he could fall asleep more easily and deeply. Stress melted away.

Mr Bundit promoted the success of his weight loss when someone asked why he skipped some menu items at a party.

"It is like the reputation of leadership to my colleagues, so practices and outcome are more valuable than words and orders, and they will enhance my credibility when I control and manage the company," he says. "My weight-loss result has led many staff in BCPG to start hitting the gym. Many of them used to give up before."

He says his example indicates that he has many jobs and duties. Even at 54, he can make himself healthier and stronger to handle all tasks.

Inspired by his transformation via health and wellness, Mr Bundit has an ambitious goal to make BCPG a game-changer in Thailand's renewable energy sector.

From the beginning, he's been goal-oriented.

"For instance, when I graduated in engineering at both bachelor and master levels, I applied to National Petrochemical Plc (NPC) instead of choosing a job with an international firm," Mr Bundit says.

NPC was one of the milestones during the 1990s before all business units were renamed to PTT Global Chemical Plc (PTTGC) in 2011.

PTTGC has grown into one of the largest petrochemical producers in Asia.

In the past, NPC was assigned by energy policymakers as the first petrochemical cracker to produce olefins, a basic



## BIODATA

**Bundit Sapianchai**

Age: 54

### Education

- Bachelor of Engineering, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Ladkrabang
- Master of Engineering, Asian Institute of Technology
- Honorary doctorate in electrical engineering, Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep

### Career

- 2015-present:** President, BCPG Plc
- 2015-16:** Senior executive vice-president, BCPG Plc
- 2013-15:** Senior executive vice-president, renewable energy business, Bangchak Corporation Plc
- 2012-13:** Senior executive vice-president, business development and strategy, Bangchak Corporation Plc
- 2008-12:** Executive vice-president, corporate business development, Bangchak Corporation Plc
- 2004-08:** Executive vice-president, corporate development and strategy, NFC Fertilizer Plc
- 1997-2004:** Business director, Air Liquid Thailand Co
- 1994-97:** Marketing director, PTT Petrochemical Co
- 1988-94:** Commercial manager, National Petrochemical Plc

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raw material of general plastic products.

As the country's first gas production came online in the Gulf of Thailand in the 1980s, more electricity could be generated to serve the petrochemical industry.

Offshore natural gas is also a kind of wet gas that can serve the petrochemical sector and add more value to plastic products.

Mr Bundit joined NPC as a commercial manager for the first olefins production in early 1990.

He jumped to Bangchak to oversee business policy and planning in 2008, when the firm pioneered biofuels in the country.

After Bangchak's biofuels began commercial operations, a year later the company started to develop and operate a solar farm with a capacity of 38 megawatts in Ayutthaya province.

Mr Bundit was a part of Bangchak's renewable power push as well.

"It was such a difficult job because solar power was very new in the Thai market and I got a lot of questions and doubts about this project," he says.

But the first solar farm coincided with the collapse of global oil prices in the second half of 2009.

Bangchak's financial performance in 2009 suffered from a huge loss from oil inventory, but the profit of the solar farm offset the damage.

As a consequence, Bangchak has been very keen on renewable power with the establishment of BCPG, led by Mr Bundit as the first high-ranking executive.

The power capacity under BCPG's ownership expanded from 94MW in 2015 to 394MW in September 2018, spanning a wide range of resources — solar, wind, geothermal — in Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Japan.

Mr Bundit says renewable power is shifting in line with new disruptive technologies in the energy sector, which



**Mr Bundit joined Bangchak in 2008 to oversee business development.**



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BCPG PRESIDENT

means not just selling power to state utilities.

The latest trend is towards peer-to-peer power trading by community members, also known as the “prosumer” concept.

This model involves deregulation to support electricity generation by communities and private power purchase agreements.

BCPG’s prosumer concept is a collaboration with Australia’s Power Ledger to set up pilot peer-to-peer trading in T77, a residential and commercial area in Bangkok’s Sukhumvit 77.

T77 is undergoing testing as BCPG plans to deeply understand the needs of those in the community and hopes they will become clients of BCPG’s prosumer concept.

Mr Bundit forecasts that services in the power sector will connect to telecommunications as the next chapter, so 5G, the Internet of Things and big data will be crucial.

In addition, the power sector is creating a new business: energy storage using lithium-ion batteries.

“Energy storage is not enough to pay back the initial investment for at least three years, but after that it will break through with disruptive technology and BCPG has to catch up with that,” Mr Bundit says. “Peer-to-peer power trading will expand once the battery prices decline and compete with the traditional power grid.”

He says BCPG has a tool to search for new technologies called the Bangchak Initiative and Innovation Center (BIIC), which is keeping an eye out for new startups.

The first initiative is working with BCPG’s manpower to redirect employees’ mindset and attitude for the new chapter of technology.

“I always ask how happy the staff are because they have to feel free to work amid the competitiveness of disruptive technology from other energy and power rivals,” Mr Bundit says. “Although it takes a lot of energy from my efforts for these things, the final outcome of BCPG’s achievement will reward it all.”