

Technical support for both hardware and software is necessary from the supplier especially in the case of mainframe computers. Some suppliers have several software houses supporting them with standard or customized packages in order to free them from high investment in the establishment of software engineer teams.

The foregoing is also true for those active vendors of micro-computers which also provide both software and customer support. While there is much application software generally available, customized software is also available if needed. Training courses and maintenance services are normally provided for their customers.

The small vendors of compatible computers, of which there are a great number in the market, usually sell the machine together with copies (legal or otherwise) of all the standard application programs. They are lacking in technical and after-sale service to their customers.

As previously stated in this report, the public sector is a large computer customer.

All government procurement are made on a bidding basis.

The Cabinet is currently discussing new rules for procurement. Under the new rules, Government agencies will be required to buy directly from the manufacturers and major distributors but they can use small suppliers when the orders are not more than Baht 200,000 each.

Virtually all computers sold in Thailand require the availability of Thai features. This can be made possible by modifying or adding-on to the hardware so that the screen can cope with Thai characters. Many sole distributors had to develop their own Thai software before attempting to market their computers. More often, they modify existing application packages into Thai.

Apart from micro-computers in the "clone market", local vendors usually operate on a 30% mark up on top of machine cost inclusive of import tariffs.

Profitability of vendors is extremely difficult to assess because of the tendency to minimise taxes.

#### Section 7 : Main Current Issues

One of the current most controversial issues in Thai politics and one which is said to have contributed greatly to the 1988 dissolution of Parliament is the copyright bill. It is also an issue on which the USA is taking the lead in raising with the Thai Government within the overall framework of bilateral trading relations between the two countries.