

Thailand National Day

A leader of sustainable development

Sahasak Phuanketkeow
AMBASSADOR OF THAILAND

Dec. 5 is the most important event on the Thai calendar. On this auspicious day, Thai people celebrate the birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, as well as Thailand's National Day.



We, the Thai people, celebrate much more than the birthday of our king, the world's longest-reigning monarch. Significantly, it is an occasion on which the Thai people reflect how far we have come under his majesty's benevolent reign.

By history, the monarchy has always been the pillar of stability and continuity in Thailand. But the king, by virtue of his exemplary deeds, has rejuvenated and brought the institution into the modern age, with relevance to the present-day challenges facing Thailand.

Therefore, Dec. 5 is the day on which Thais from all walks of life join hands in commemorating the king's life-long commitment and dedication, which has earned him the respect and reverence of the entire Thai nation.

The image that we Thais have of his majesty is not one of a king who rules from the throne. It is one of a working monarch who passionately cares about the livelihood and welfare of the people.

For the Thai public, the image of his majesty is of one who travels to rural parts of the country, kneeling down listening attentively to elderly villagers, learning about their plights and seeking ways to address them.

It is an image of a king walking in the midday sun, with a map in one hand, a camera round his neck and sweat dripping from his forehead, overseeing development projects that have improved the lives of millions.

In his 69 years on the



Wat Phra Kaew (Temple of the Emerald Buddha) is regarded as the most sacred Buddhist temple in Thailand. EMBASSY OF THAILAND

throne, his majesty has initiated over 4,000 projects, ranging from irrigation, farming, drought and flood alleviation, crop substitution, public health, distance learning, and employment promotion. The king has been practicing the concept of a "sufficiency economy" as a path to sustainability long before "sustainable develop-

ment" became a global development agenda.

His outstanding contributions to development have earned him the United Nations Development Programme's inaugural Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006.

We Thais are truly proud to have such a dedicated monarch and are grateful for his de-

votion and revere him as "Father of the Land."

Thailand-Japan relations

Thailand is also proud of our long-standing relationship with Japan that dates back 600 years, long before our diplomatic relations officially began in 1887.

Since the 15th century, Japan and Thailand have enjoyed amicable relations conducted between the Kingdom of Ayutthaya and the Kingdom of Ryukyu. There was even a Japanese village where thousands of Japanese came to live and work in Ayutthaya.

Nagamasa Yamada, originally from Shizuoka Prefecture, was one of them. He served the Royal Court of Ayutthaya with great distinction and rose to assume many prominent positions. He was subsequently appointed as Governor of Nakhon Si Thammarat Province in Thailand. Every year, Shizuoka Prefecture still celebrates his life and the friendship between Japan and Thailand.

To this day, relations between Japan and Thailand continue to be strong and vibrant. Japan is Thailand's second-largest trading partner and largest foreign direct investment (FDI) provider. Japan's investment to Thailand accounts for 60 percent of total FDI in Thailand. Japan has indeed been a partner in Thailand's economic development.

I believe that this economic partnership will become even stronger. This is because stability has returned to Thailand. Politically, we are strengthening our democratic institutions and are working toward stable and sustainable democracy that meets the aspirations of the Thai people.

On the economic front, Thailand is back on a path of renewed economic growth. We are in the process of reforming

our economy to be more competitive. This means seeking a new generation of investment in science, technology and innovation that would raise the level of our economic development.

A case in point is our automobile industry, which is already one of our strongest sectors. Thailand is already the world's ninth-largest producer of automobiles and, looking ahead, we aim to become a manufacturer of high technology and environmentally friendly automobiles.

We also want to create new industries that will expand our industrial base and respond to future trade and investment growth, be they robotics, aviation, digital or bio-industries.

Ultimately the key to our economic future lies in human resource development so as to improve worker skills to support upgraded and new industries. Thailand would like to work with Japan to enhance our human resources, also benefitting Japanese companies in Thailand.

Thailand is also focusing on strengthening our small and medium enterprises (SMEs), which are the main driving force of our economy. We would like to explore how our SMEs can partner with their Japanese counterparts to create a win-win situation.

To generate sustainable growth, Thailand needs to improve infrastructure to enhance connectivity within the country and beyond. This includes the construction of mass transit systems linking Bangkok and its suburbs, high-speed trains and dual-track rail connecting north and south and east and west. We are working closely with the Japanese private sector on many of these projects.

Thailand is also working with Japan on the development of the Dawei Special Economic



Their Majesties King Bhumibol Adulyadej and his wife Queen Sirikit of Thailand

Zone in Myanmar. We hope to link Dawei with the Eastern Seaboard in Laem Chabang, Thailand. Once completed, this would open a new chapter in transport and logistics for the region. It will create a new economic corridor connecting the South China Sea with the Indian Ocean, and beyond.

With the launching of the ASEAN Community the end of this month, ASEAN will become a single market and production base of 600 million people. Thailand will be the gateway for Japan to trade and invest more in ASEAN. Many Japanese companies are already using Thailand as a platform for their businesses through the "Thailand-plus-one" model.

The progress of Japan-Thailand relations over the past year is due to the political momentum generated by the close ties between our governments. Within this period, our prime ministers have met six times on various occasions, in-

cluding three visits to Japan by our Prime Minister, Gen. Prayut Chan-ocha.

What really makes our bilateral relations stand out is the friendship and goodwill between our peoples. Thai people have great admiration for Japan's spearheading of Asia's rise and the richness of its arts and culture, as well as Japanese people's work ethics and discipline.

Japan is the most popular tourist destination for Thai people. This year alone, the number of Thai visitors to Japan is expected to reach 800,000, while more than one million Japanese visit Thailand annually and more than 50,000 Japanese reside in Thailand.

We Thais are privileged to share the celebration of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's birthday with all our friends in Japan, and I am confident that the future promises an even stronger friendship and partnership between our two countries and peoples.

Enhancing bilateral economic cooperation across a range of sectors

Masahiro Okafuji and
Toshiyuki Shiga
CHAIRS OF THE JAPAN-THAILAND
TRADE AND ECONOMIC
COMMITTEE, KEIDANREN

On behalf of the Japan-Thailand Trade and Economic Committee of Keidanren, we humbly offer our heartfelt congratulations to His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej on his 88th birthday.

Thailand, which hosts more than 1,500 Japanese companies, is Japan's largest business hub in Asia, and the country's importance is further increasing with the launch of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) at the end of this year. Following the agreement



Okafuji Shiga

on major elements of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), we believe it is important for ASEAN-plus-6 countries (ASEAN member states, China, South Korea, Australia, India, New Zealand and Japan) to promptly reach an agreement on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) toward the formation of a free-trade

zone that encompasses all the Asia-Pacific region, and we would like to continue to work closely with your country.

In the efforts to enhance the economic cooperation between Japan and Thailand, the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) which your country is initiating are of great importance. We are convinced the various incentives the SEZs offer will prove highly useful for Japanese manufacturers, including small and medium-size enterprises, who seek to set up supply chains throughout the Mekong region as a "Thailand-Plus-One" business model.

Economic cooperation between Japan and Thailand will not be limited to the man-

ufacturing industry. In February, Keidanren, together with Thailand's Joint Standing Committee on Commerce, Industry and Banking, held the 23rd Meeting of Japan-Thailand Joint Trade and Economic Committee in Bangkok and reaffirmed that there is great room for collaboration in promoting innovation, nurturing a higher value-added agriculture, cultivating entertainment content industry, and tackling the issues of climate change and the aging population.

We would like to take actions to realize these joint endeavors into reality, and sincerely ask those relevant parties for further assistance and cooperation.

Royal Greetings to His Majesty

King Bhumibol Adulyadej

of Thailand

on the Occasion of His Birthday



MITSUI & CO.

On the Auspicious Occasion
of the 88th Birthday of His Majesty
King Bhumibol Adulyadej
of the Kingdom of Thailand

The Japan Thailand Association
President: Teisuke Kitayama

2-19-3, Jinbocho, Kanda, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-0051

On the Auspicious Occasion
of the 88th Birthday of His Majesty
King Bhumibol Adulyadej
of the Kingdom of Thailand

Japan-Thailand Business Forum (JTBF)

Chairman: Teisuke Kitayama
<http://www.jtbf.info>

Royal Greetings to His Majesty
King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand
on the Occasion of His Birthday



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On the auspicious occasion of
the Anniversary of His Majesty's Birthday,
we humbly offer our respectful felicitations
and abiding loyalty to
**HIS MAJESTY KING
BHUMIBOL ADULYADEJ.**

プミボン アドゥンヤデート国王陛下の
お誕生日に際して、
敬意を表し、
心からのお祝いを申し上げます。

THAI
Thai Airways International
Public Company Limited

Thailand National Day



Trat province in the east of Thailand is known for its beach resorts. EMBASSY OF THAILAND

Increased exchanges of people to further enhance relationship

Teisuke Kitayama
PRESIDENT, THE JAPAN THAILAND
ASSOCIATION, CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-
THAILAND BUSINESS FORUM

I would like to offer my warmest congratulations on the birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who has turned 88 years old. On this happy occasion, I also offer my best wishes for the health and happiness of the king, other members of his royal family and all Thai people.



Although the draft constitution under way was rejected, thus sending the formulation of a new constitution back to square one and delaying the restoration of democracy, I am secure in the knowledge that there is no major disruption. The government of Thailand has unveiled a new plan to return to democracy, and I sincerely hope things will be steadily advanced in accordance with the governmental plan.

A look at the condition of the Thai economy in 2015 shows a slow recovery in domestic consumption and private-sector investment, and exports growing at a sluggish pace due to an economic downturn in China. Although the gross domestic product growth rate is expected to improve compared with that of 2014, I am concerned that the Thai economy has been in a protracted recession compared to the economies of other member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Still, considering that the

government, following a Cabinet reshuffle, is implementing new economic measures in rapid succession and will continue large-scale projects such as traffic infrastructure, as well as the fact that the number of tourists from abroad to Thailand is recovering, I expect that the Thai economy will recover. Especially, its industry accumulation over a number of years distinguishes itself with few equals, so Thailand remains a very important manufacturing base for Japanese companies. There are 1,665 member companies in the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Bangkok as of the end of October, increasing by 73 from a year earlier. Plainly speaking, the trends of how Japanese companies are recently expanding their business in Thailand are "from more rural areas," "smaller in scale," and deal in "soft power" and "infrastructure."

I am certain the integrated ASEAN market will become stronger and even more attractive with the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community at the end of this month. Thailand, which is home to the supply chains of corporations from across the world, plays a central role among ASEAN because of its geographical and economic position. I believe that Thailand will take advantage of such assets to achieve further success next year and beyond.

As for the bilateral flow of people, the number of Thai visitors to Japan reached 627,000 in the January to October period this year (a rise of 22.2 percent over the same period last year, according to statistics by the Japan National Tourism

Organization). From Japan, 1,141,000 people traveled to Thailand in the same period (a rise of 12.1 percent over the same period last year, according to statistics by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Kingdom of Thailand).

With fewer children continuing to develop in Japan, universities are actively accepting foreign students and more than 30 Japanese universities have opened offices in Bangkok. I hope more Thai people will visit Japan, come into contact with Japanese culture and study in Japan to develop a love for the country. I also wish to see more Japanese visit Thailand to learn about its culture and society so that mutual understanding between the two countries will deepen.

Needless to say, Japan and Thailand have developed close ties over many years at all levels, including between the two nations' royal families, in politics, and through economic and cultural activities.

In addition to being business partners, as Japan is the largest investor in Thailand, they are countries whose people visit to learn each other's culture, and I expect these ties, including social and cultural exchanges, will be further broadened. The Japan Thailand Association and the Japan-Thailand Business Forum are determined to be of help in promoting the two countries further exchanges.

On this occasion of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's birthday, let me express my earnest hope that Japan and Thailand will further build on its long-running relationship so that our bond will become even more solid.

**Royal Greetings to His Majesty
King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand
on the Occasion of His Birthday**

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