

Thailand national day

An auspicious year for Thai-Japan relations

Pichai Israbhakdi
CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I., THE ROYAL THAI
EMBASSY

The 5th of December every year is a very important occasion for the Thai people as it is the birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand, the beloved "monarch and Father of Thai people." This day is celebrated by Thais both at home and abroad as Thailand's National Day.

On this auspicious occasion, I am honored to extend, on behalf of the government and people of Thailand, our deepest respect to Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress and the Imperial Family, and our earnest greetings and best wishes for happiness, prosper-

ity and continued success to the government and people of Japan.

The year 2009 is especially propitious for the people of Thailand, as it is the 82nd birthday anniversary of His Majesty, the world's longest reigning living monarch. His Majesty is not only the symbol of the national unity for the Thai people, but also an inspiration for numerous others around the globe. As Thailand's "Development King," His Majesty's royal projects and initiatives have helped to alleviate the hardships of millions of his people.

This year is also auspicious for the people of Japan, for it is the year in which Japanese people commemorate the 20th anniversary of the accession to the throne of His Majesty the Emperor and the 50th wedding anniversary of the Emperor and the Empress of Ja-



Close ties: Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva of Thailand meets with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama on Nov. 7 during the first Japan-Mekong summit in Tokyo. EMBASSY OF THAILAND

pan. The two auspicious anniversaries of Their Majesties have made the year a most promising period of commemoration and celebrations.

The year 2009 is another

milestone in the close and cordial relations between Thailand and Japan. Despite various challenges, we are moving forward together. Japan remains Thailand's largest for-

eign investor. The Japanese community is one of the largest foreign business communities in Thailand. With the direct contribution of the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement, or JTEPA, our two-way trade in 2009 is worth more than \$31.3 billion. People-to-people contacts are growing, with Thai and Japanese youths looking to one another for the latest trends and ideas. It is estimated that almost 1 million Japanese tourists will visit Thailand in 2009.

Politically, the Thai and Japanese governments' relationship has been closer and more cooperative. Thailand, as this year's chair of ASEAN, hosted the 15th ASEAN summit and related summits in Hua Hin from Oct. 23 to 25, during which Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva had a fruitful discussion on various issues of mutual interest with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoya-



King Bhumibol Adulyadej, hospitalized for fever and fatigue, has postponed the birthday eve address.

His Majesty, King Bhumibol

King Bhumibol Adulyadej is the ninth king of the Chakri Dynasty, which was founded in 1782 by King Rama I. King Bhumibol, Rama IX, is the longest reigning king in Thai history. Though Thailand's political system is officially classified as a constitutional monarchy, the constitution states that the king be "enthroned in a position of revered worship" and not be exposed to any sort of accusation or "action." Without any legal writ, Thai citizens hold their king in the highest regard for his dedication to his people through an impressive list of public works projects and his humanitarian activities of good will.

ma. The first Japan-Mekong summit on Nov. 6 and 7 in Tokyo was another occasion when the two prime ministers discussed, together with the leaders of Mekong countries, areas of cooperation for the development of the Mekong region. These meetings and di-

alogues are helping to create even closer ties between Thailand and Japan.

I am certain that our past shall be our inspiration, and I am convinced that the amiability between Thailand and Japan will grow stronger in all aspects. The Royal Thai Gov-

ernment stands ready to work with the government of Japan for the mutual benefit of our two countries and peoples. Finally, may I express my gratitude and appreciation to The Japan Times and its readers for making this year's celebration meaningful.

Best wishes offered to the king on his birthday

Ken-ichi Suematsu
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-THAILAND ASSOCIATION

His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej turns 82 years old today, on which I offer my cordial and sincere congratulations to the King, his royal family and the Thai people. I wish for their continued and even better health, happiness and prosperity.

Amid the unstable economic situation besetting the world, Thailand has regained stability in its politics and economy this year and heightened its presence in Asia.

Thai politics had been more or less in confusion since a coup d'etat in 2006, but the new

government led by Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva has patiently and democratically carved out a route toward a settlement. On the diplomatic front, Thailand is holding the ASEAN chairmanship this year, drawing the world's attention to Asia as a region of potentially high economic growth.

The global economy appears to have finally hit bottom, but it still cannot guarantee optimism. Thailand is still being affected in its export of industrial products. Domestic consumption, however, has been faring relatively well, indicating that stable domestic consumer markets are already in existence. This can raise expectations that Asia is transforming from a producing area to a consuming area, in which the Thai economy

will play a leading role and assume more importance in the global economy.

This is a Japan-Mekong Exchange Year, for which Japan and five countries through which the Mekong flows — Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam — have been conducting various exchange events and projects since January to promote and deepen mutual understanding and friendship in all fields, including economic and cultural ones.

The Japan-Thai Association has held a "Thai Forum" as a Japan-Mekong Exchange Year 2009 event in cooperation with the Thai Embassy in Tokyo to provide more Japanese with an opportunity to learn about the attractive kingdom. I am very pleased to see this year take on great signifi-

cance in terms of letting us Japanese grow much closer to Asian peoples as comrades.

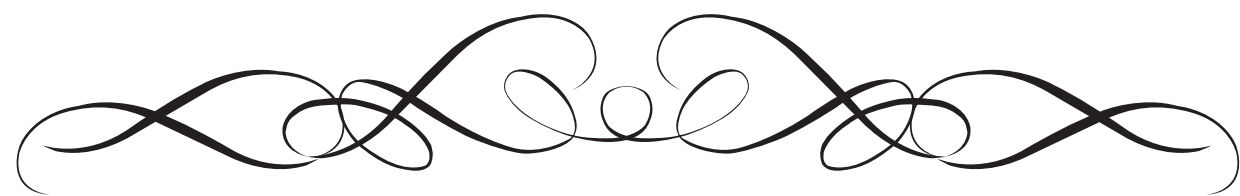
I expect the Japan-Mekong Exchange Year to provide an impetus to further expanding exchanges between Japan and ASEAN countries in the future.

Among other things, I think the development of the Mekong basin, and the effective use of the east-west corridor and the north-south corridor, can help Southeast Asian countries significantly expand economic and cultural exchanges beyond national borders, and build a more prosperous Asia.

I cordially hope for a still stronger bond between Japan and Thailand. Let me again wish His Majesty the King of Thailand many happy returns of the day.

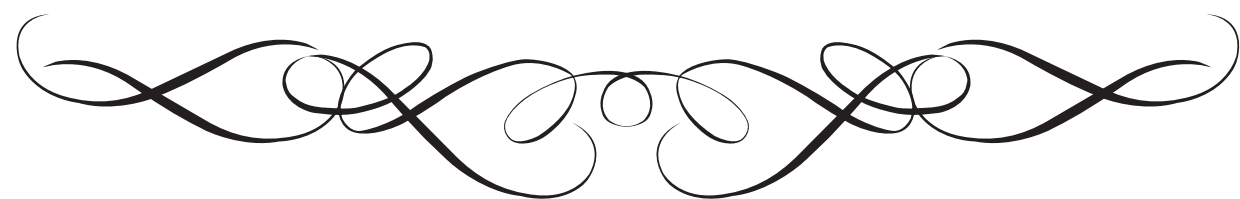


House of worship: Bangkok National Museum's Buddhaisawan Chapel houses the Phra Buddhashing, an important sacred Buddha image. The paintings in this chapel are the oldest murals in Bangkok. TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND



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.



プミポン 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。

On the auspicious occasion of the 82nd Birthday of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, we humbly offer our respectful congratulations.

プミポン アドゥンヤデート 国王陛下のお誕生日を心よりお祝い申し上げます。

เนื่องในมหามงคลสมัย

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So much to see in City of Angels

Cultural sightseeing in Bangkok can be a daunting task considering there are so many places to see, and they're spread all over the city. To fight the traffic and reach all of the sites would require a great deal of patience and perseverance.

A good way to start off in terms of getting the most Bang(kok) for the Buck would be at the Grand Palace. Constructed simultaneously with the establishment of Bangkok by King Rama I the Great, the complex covers about 218,000 sq. meters and comprises three major quarters — the throne halls, royal residences and Temple of the Emerald Buddha.

The Temple of the Emerald Buddha is a royal temple in the northeastern corner of the Grand Palace compound. It is where the image of the Emerald Buddha is enshrined and where royal religious ceremonies have been performed. Construction of the temple was completed in 1784, and it has consistently undergone restoration from the reign of King Rama I through to the reign of the current king, Rama IX.

Next to the Grand Palace Complex is Wat Pho, home of the 46-meter-long Reclining Buddha. The temple is considered the first center of public education and is regarded as "Thailand's first university." Thai traditional massage is taught at this temple. Certified masseuses are available for weary tourists wanting to relax after a long sightseeing day.

Across the Chao Phraya River from the Grand Palace is Wat Arun (Temple of Dawn), famed for its sparkling porcelain encrusted 79-meter central pagoda. Surrounded by four smaller pagodas, the Khmer-style central structure was constructed by King Rama II and King Rama III. The central balcony commands an impressive view of Bangkok.

At the Royal Barge National Museum, Thailand's ornately carved and decorated Royal Barges are displayed in boat sheds on Khlong (Canal) Bangkok Noi, just off the Chao Phraya River near Phra Pin Klao Bridge on the Thon Buri side. The barges are used on royal occasions and formerly served as war vessels.

While heading across town to Yaowarat, Bangkok's Chinatown, it is worthwhile to stop and admire an ancient solid-gold seated Buddha image of the Sukhothai Period at Wat Trai Mit at the end of Chinatown's Yaowarat Road near Bangkok Railway Station.



Landmark: Wat Arun, often called the Temple of Dawn, is one of the most distinctive buildings in Bangkok. From here one can see the Grand Palace, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha and Wat Po across the river. TOURISM AUTHORITY OF THAILAND

Chinatown (Yaowarat) was gradually settled by Chinese traders who came by junk to trade with Siam during the Sukhothai era. By 1891, King Rama V had several more roads cut through the area with Yaowarat Road as its center. The shape of Yaowarat Road is curved like a dragon's body, making it an ideal location for business. Visitors can find an impressive variety of goods here, including gold, textiles, garments, souvenirs, second-hand parts and equipment, electronic products, computer parts, antiques, imported musical instruments and definite-

ly local delicacies.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand's Web site is at www.tourismthailand.org. The

Tokyo office is in the Yurakucho Denki Building, a one-minute walk from Yurakucho Station.



Temple guardian: A statue of demon called Yakshas greets visitors at the entrance to Temple of the Emerald Buddha.

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

The Japan Thailand Association

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