

Statement
by
His Excellency Dr. Virachai Plasai
Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to the United States
on the Occasion of the Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty
the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the National Day of the Kingdom of Thailand,
and Thailand's Father's Day

The Ritz-Carlton Hotel,
Washington, D.C.
4 December 2018

***Your Honorable Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale,
Excellencies,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

It is a great honor for me to extend a very warm welcome to all of you to this reception to celebrate three auspicious occasions. First, the Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej – December 5 -, which also marks the second and third occasions, namely the National Day of the Kingdom of Thailand and the Thai Father's Day.

This triple celebration is a great opportunity to pay tribute to a remarkable monarch, whom in Thailand is considered as the Father of the Nation and the National Unity Symbol.

A Statesman of many talents, His late Majesty King Bhumibol was loved and admired by Thais from all walks of life for his hard work and dedication to the better livelihood of his people. His legacy still lives on in the thousands of royal-initiated development projects in various fields such as poverty eradication, resource management and rural development, to name but a few. An accomplished artist, poet, musician and composer, he was also a great philosopher. His gift of "Sufficiency Economy Philosophy", bestowed upon his people decades ago, has been and still constitutes the guiding light for our national development programs. During his 70 years reign, the Kingdom was transformed beyond recognition. From a so-called "under-developed country" in the 1940's, Thailand has now become an upper middle-income nation with healthy economic growth, well on its way to become a modern "4.0 society" based on digital and creative economy and innovation.

Most importantly, His late Majesty has come to be internationally known as the “Development King”. His Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has now been shared with and implemented in the more than 20 developing countries as a viable approach to implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. His life-long work to eradicate opium production in Thailand, a total success, has been adopted as model by the United Nations under the branding “Alternative Development”, now being implemented in many countries. His internationally recognized work in soil resources development prompted the United Nations General Assembly, in 2013, to proclaim by resolution December 5 of every year, His Majesty’s Birthday Anniversary, the World Soil Day.

Distinguished guests,

The only monarch ever to be born on U.S. soil - Cambridge, Massachusetts to be precise - His late Majesty King Bhumibol is the perfect symbol of the long-standing friendship between the peoples and the Governments of United States of America and the Kingdom of Thailand. Indeed, part of his life-long work was dedicated to strengthening this friendship, taking it to yet another height during his reign.

Today, the state of the U.S.-Thai friendship is as strong as ever under the reign of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn. 2018, in particular, has been a very special year in building up further the legacy, as we celebrate 200th Anniversary of the “first contact” and the 185th anniversary of our formal diplomatic relations establishment.

In Bangkok earlier this year, the U.S. Embassy, led by my good friend His Excellency Ambassador Glyn Davies, in collaboration with Thai and American partner agencies, organized the excellent “Great and Good Friends Exhibition” at the Grand Palace, which was graciously opened by His Majesty the King. Here in Washington, D.C., in September at the Library of Congress, my Embassy, with the support of the US-ASEAN Business Council, organized a jazz concert of His late Majesty King Bhumibol’s compositions to mark this special year. On both occasions, rare historical letters and gifts presented by leaders of our two nations were on display to the public, many of which for the first time ever.

Throughout the year, exchanges of high-level visits and frequent dialogue at all levels have been intensified. After the fruitful, historic visit of the Thai Prime Minister to the White House in October 2017, our Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister made a one-week visit to the United States last April, to be

followed in his footsteps by our Chief of Defense Forces, our National Security Council Secretary-General and our Deputy Commerce Minister.

In the meantime, Thailand was very pleased to receive many high-ranking American officials this year, such as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Joseph Dunford, former Indo-Pacific Commander Admiral Harry Harris, and the new Indo-Pacific Commander Admiral Phil Davidson. Just last week, the Thai-US Defense Strategic Talks was concluded in Bangkok, and I am pleased that Assistant Secretary of Defense Randall Schriver had a very good visit there.

Today is a fitting finale of this eventful year in our bilateral ties. And I would like to thank Under Secretary of State David Hale and all Friends of Thailand for being with us in tonight's celebration.

Distinguished guests,

The relationship between our two countries is not just about rich history. It is also about a future full of potentials.

As we strive toward realizing the October 2017 vision common to our leaders of a "Stronger Alliance for Common Security and Closer Economic Partnership for Common Prosperity", we realize that there are room to expand and consolidate further both our alliance and economic partnership.

Our decades-old alliance is going strong. I look forward to working closely with my US colleagues to ensure that this alliance remains relevant in the modern context and continue to positively contribute to regional peace, security and stability.

I also look forward, on the economic side, to working with all concerned to increase the two-way trade and investment to the mutual benefit of both our countries and peoples. In this regard, I cannot underline enough the strong potential of our friends in the private sector. American companies are world leaders in science and technology, Research & Development, and innovation. They are our natural and important partners in our aspiration toward a more digitized and technology-driven economy, as outlined in the "Thailand 4.0" policy. Thai companies are also increasing their investment in the United States, reflecting their confidence in the U.S. economic potentials and their commitment to contributing to local employment. They are so far present in 25 States across this great country, and the number is growing.

2019 will be a good opportunity for the United States and Thailand to elevate our relationship to a higher plane, both bilaterally and in the regional context. As the incoming ASEAN Chair, we look forward to working closely with the United States to further advance the ASEAN-U.S. Strategic Partnership to the benefit of all parties.

On this note, let me conclude by expressing my firm confidence that, for the next 200 years and beyond, the future of the U.S.-Thai friendship, alliance and partnership looks very bright indeed.

Thank you.