

The Thais in Romania and throughout the world are celebrating the National Day of Thailand on 5 December!

Interview with H.E. Mr. Komgrit Varakamin, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Thailand to Romania

What is the meaning of December the 5th for Thailand?

December the 5th is the date of birth of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej or King Rama IX of Thailand. This date also marks the National Day of the Kingdom of Thailand.

HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej was born to HRH Prince Songkhla Mahidol and Mom Sangwan on December 5, 1927, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A. Therefore, he has turned 88 years old today. Today (5 December), Thailand celebrated the 88th Birthday Anniversary of their King nationwide. The Thai communities abroad celebrated the same event worldwide.

Furthermore, as HM King Bhumibol Adulyadej has acceded to the throne since June 9, 1946, or 69 years ago, HM is, therefore, currently the world's longest reigning monarch.

What do the Thais do to express their love and loyalty of the King?

Thai nationals in Thailand and around the world celebrate this occasion to honor their beloved King in recognition of his devotion and hard work for the Thai people. The Thais call December the 5th as the "Father's Day." Activities in celebration are numerous; their loyalty is immense.

HM's royal projects which are as many as 4,400 in number have improved the livelihood of the Thai people. The royal projects, the first one originated since 1952, have touched on virtually all-round aspects of life: irrigation; agriculture; environment; vocational training; public health; communication and transportation; social welfare and education; and integrated developments.

The successes of these projects have been acknowledged as "best practices" nationally and internationally, and in effect laying the foundation for a new philosophy of sufficiency economy.

HM's contribution is appreciated worldwide. On May 26, 2006, HM was presented with the first ever Human Development Lifetime Achievement Award by Mr. Kofi Annan, then Secretary-General of the United Nations.

Recently, His Majesty's work in the field of soil resources development has also been well recognized. In 2013, the United Nations General Assembly in its 68th session adopted a resolution to declare December the 5th of every year as the World Soil Day – in recognition of the tremendous efforts and dedication of His Majesty the King in this regard. The UNGA also declared 2015 as the International Year of Soils.

How do you assess the level of relations between Thailand and Romania?

Excellent! The two countries have established diplomatic relations since June 1, 1973. Thailand has opened its Embassy in Bucharest for over 30 years. Members of Royal Families have exchanged visits to each other's countries during the past years.

Diplomatically, the two countries share the same values for democracy, human rights, peace and prosperity from market economy and free trade.

Bilateral trade which is presently at the volume of a few hundreds of million Euros, however, has yet to expand and increase - benefiting from full potentials. Thus far, I have encouraged authorities in Bangkok to send more trade missions to explore more possibilities here. I have recommended that



besides concentrating on its own region, the two sides should reach out and get acquainted.

I am pleased to inform that for the past two months alone, I have received two Thai businessmen delegations led by the advisor to Thai-Romanian Business Council, Board of Trade of Thailand. I have arranged a networking session for them with officials from the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Romania, Romanian businessmen, diplomats, resource persons at the official residence, where I treated both sides to a Thai food dinner too. Romania's pharmaceuticals and energy are two promising areas that have attracted the Thai side's attention. In addition, I have recommended a big supermarket chain from France to consider importing export products in the areas of food and beverages directly from Thai companies to sell at their branches in Romania. I am delighted to note that the two sides have arranged a business appointment.

What are the priorities with regard to the initiatives you have taken to strengthen friendly relations between the two countries?

As the Ambassador of Thailand, I have put priority on three major areas, which are 1) cultural exchange, 2) tourism between the two countries and 3) Thai food and Thai food products while strengthening the overall bilateral relations. These three said areas are important because they "begin with the people", deal with people and go toward other people. Such a unique characteristic of friendliness among the Thais makes Thailand known as the "Land of Smiles."

During my first 21 months of diplomatic service in Bucharest, the Royal Thai Embassy organized a number of activities, besides participating in functions, alone or with Romanian authorities, as follows: "Songkran" Water Festival (April); Thai Festival (May, with Dimitrie Gusti Village Museum); Golf Tournament and Thai Food Promotion Festivals on 9 occasions with Tourism Authority of Thailand; HM Queen of Thailand Birthday Anniversary (August); and Thai Food Cooking Class and Romanian Wine and Gastronomy

(September, with National Authority for Tourism of Romania last year and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of

Prahova this year).

In 2016, we look forward to organizing and participating in activities like the above and more in Bucharest, Sibiu, Poiana Brasov and other cities of Romania.

I am confident that through cultural exchange, people's contacts and tourism, the peoples of Thailand and Romania will know one another better and more. The mutual knowledge will strengthen the amicable relationship and cooperation for the interests of the two countries, which have yet to be fully promoted.

What is the special event for the celebration of the 88th Birthday Anniversary in Thailand and Bucharest?

December 5 this year has marked His Majesty's 88th Birthday Anniversary. His Royal Highness Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn has initiated a project called "Bike for Dad" to be a campaign among bicyclists to show unity and solidarity



among the Thais in paying tribute to His Majesty the King. His Royal Highness the Crown Prince of Thailand will lead a movement of bicyclists, both inside and outside Thailand on 11 December 2015 at 15.00 hrs. The participants in Thailand who have registered are numbered at 607,909 while Thai participants abroad who have registered are numbered at 9,805. Among the latter group are 166 from Romania, including myself. Expatriates in Thailand and local residents abroad are welcomed to join too. On 16 August 2015, the Thais joined hands in organizing the first-ever "Bike for Mom" in honor of Her Majesty Queen

Sirikit of Thailand. It was a huge success.

For her part, the Royal Thai Embassy in Bucharest will organize the "Bike for Dad" activity with the Thai community, friends of Thailand, Romanian teaching staff and students of the School No. 190. We will show to the people in Thailand and the world in special broadcast that the Thais and Romanians are in solidarity in paying tribute to the "longest-reigning King of the World."

What are your views on the "touristic treasures" of Thailand and Romania?

Amazing Thailand has much to offer: Buddhist temples, exotic wildlife, spectacular islands and some of the best beaches in the world, where you can sunbathe, swim, snorkel or scuba. Along with a fascinating history and a unique culture that includes delicious Thai food, Thailand features a modern capital city and friendly people who help make Thailand known as the "Land of Smiles."

As to Romania, I would like to welcome Thai tourists to visit your country. Romania is renowned for its historical and cultural places, wonderful landscapes, scenery, sports, wines and gastronomy, spa treatment, etc. Thai people will be surprised to explore the beautiful Romania -- the Carpathian Garden.

In 2014, Thailand welcomed the foreign tourists at the number of 27.3 million, among whom are almost 20,000 Romanian tourists to Thailand. I am hopeful that there will be a marked increase of the number of Romanian tourists among some 29 million overall foreign tourists expected to visit Thailand this year.

What is the message of the Thai people to the Romanian people?

On behalf of the Thai people, I wish to express sincere appreciation to the Government and people of Romania for understanding developments in Thailand at present. We are firmly committed to bringing about a stronger and more sustainable

democracy for all people of Thailand. Thailand is on the road to coming back stronger and more confident to be a very active participant in world community as before. At present, Thailand holds the Chairmanship of the Group of 77 in 2016, a prestigious reward and recognition for her hard work.

On the occasion of the National Day of Romania on December 1, 2015 and the New Year's Day, I wish to extend best wishes and congratulations to the Romanian people for the continued progress in the right directions toward stability and greater prosperity of Romania. I am very confident in Romania's determination and present directions.