

**Address by  
His Excellency Mr Noppadon Theppitak, Ambassador of  
Thailand  
At a Reception on the Occasion of  
the 86th Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty the King of  
Thailand  
and the National Day of Thailand  
4 December 2013  
Royal Thai Embassy**

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**Honourable Nikki Kaye, Minister of Civil Defence, Minister of  
Food Safety, Minister of Youth Affairs, Associate Minister of  
Education and Associate Minister of Immigration,  
Distinguished Members of the Parliament,  
Excellencies, High Commissioners,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is my great honour to welcome you here this evening  
to celebrate the 86th Birthday Anniversary of His Majesty King  
Bhumibol Adulyadej and the National Day of Thailand.**

**Now in the 68<sup>th</sup> year of His reign, His Majesty remains  
the longest reigning monarch in the world today, as well as the  
longest reigning monarch in Thai history. His Majesty's life of  
service to the nation continues to grow in significance for all Thai  
people.**

**It was a matter of considerable joy to learn in August this year that  
His Majesty was in good health and, together with Her Majesty  
Queen Sirikit, had left the Hospital in Bangkok for Klaikangwol  
Palace, beside the sea at Hua Hin, for a period of recuperation. It  
is good news to hear that they are both recovering well, and that**

**this year, His Majesty the King will be giving a televised audience to his people on this very night, on the eve of his birthday.**

**Before I go on further, allow me to mention that although we have enjoyed some very positive developments this year, our region has also been going through some tough times and we are still recovering from them. I'm talking about typhoon Haiyan which struck the Philippines three weeks ago. The immense damage and loss of lives have left families and communities devastated, and their lives will never be the same again. We know that the people of the Philippines are strong and have always shown enormous resilience against such tests of strength, but our thoughts and prayers are with them and I hope that this period of recovery will be swift and bring our friends back to a state of normalcy as soon as possible.**

**I also must mention about the recent developments in my own country, and the political tension that have taken place in recent days in Bangkok, which have caused loss of some lives and injuries.**

**The on-going demonstrations are an indication of Thailand's democracy still in process. However, we do not condone acts of violence that have been the source of such irreparable grief and damage. All parties concerned are trying their best to exercise restraint and avoid any further acts of violence. We are working towards reconciling all our differences to find an acceptable solution for our country to move forward. We ask for your understanding and support, and time for us to find our own solution through this delicate and complicated situation.**

**I now ask you to join me in observing a moment of silence, to pay our respects and condolences to the recent passing away of the victims of Typhoon Haiyan, and to the Thai citizens who have been affected by the incidents in Bangkok, and to wish for strength for their bereaved families to cope in a time of such immense loss. Let us hope that all will recover from their grief and emerge even stronger.**

**Thank you.**

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Although our political situation is going through some rough times, on the economic front, we seem to have done better.**

**Though there has been a general slow-down in economic growth around the world, Thailand has been able to maintain an economic growth rate falling only slightly from 6.5% in 2012 to around 4% for 2013. This has been achieved through implementing significant stimulus measures, maintaining low public debt, a strong domestic market and the diversification of our export markets, as well as through the continued emphasis on attracting increasing numbers of tourist visits from key markets.**

**Thailand has been ranked highly by the World Bank for “Ease of Doing Business” during the past several years. For 2013, Thailand has been ranked as 18th in the world and 5th in East Asia. The Government is revising its investment promotion strategy to enhance value creation in the industrial sector and to promote green industry and investment overseas. At the same time, the Government has implemented large scale infrastructure projects worth 75 billion USD, the largest such investment among the ASEAN countries, and placing a high priority on the flood**

**mitigation plan for industries of all sizes. The Government has allocated 12.6 billion USD to help manufacturers affected by the floods in late 2011 and will invest a further 12 billion USD for the integrated improvement of water and flood management, particularly in the central Thai plains region.**

**I wish to point out, that through thick and thin, New Zealand has always remained our true friend indeed. We are highly appreciative of the strong support that New Zealand has always shown to us. No matter what situation we are going through, New Zealand has stayed true to its commitment with Thailand as a partner for cooperation and development in all dimensions, and has always rendered a hand whenever needed. And as true friends, Thailand will also remain committed to New Zealand to build upon our strong partnership into the future as we embark upon new avenues for collaboration, raising the platform we have built this past year.**

**This has indeed been a fruitful year of cooperation for Thailand and New Zealand. Our prime ministers exchanged visits to our respective countries all within this year, and from those visits, many more initiatives have sprouted. As I have mentioned to many of you earlier, we will all have our work cut out for us in order to follow up on what our leaders have agreed upon, but the busier we are, the merrier. Our peoples are the ones who will enjoy the deepened friendship, the economic benefits, employment and education opportunities, and so much more. So let me briefly summarize to you what we have done this past year.**

**It was my great honour to be able to accompany my Prime Minister on her official visit to New Zealand in March this year; and again much more recently, to accompany the Right Honourable John Key on his official visit to Thailand during 17 –**

**19 November. And at the parliamentary level as well, our relations were further strengthened through the visit to Thailand by the Right Honourable David Carter, Speaker of the House of Representatives, in early October this year. And as a particular honour, this was his first overseas visit since assuming the position of Speaker. A Memorandum of Understanding to establish a joint Parliamentary Friendship Group was signed during the visit.**

**On all occasions, I was impressed by the strength of our bilateral relations, and the exciting projects upon which we are able to work together. I'd like to share with you only a small sampler of these.**

**The outstanding highlight of Her Excellency Ms Yingluck Shinawatra's visit to New Zealand in March was her receipt of an Honorary Ph.D. by the AUT University in Auckland. It was a moment of great pride for all Thai people everywhere; that our first female Prime Minister was honoured in this way.**

**But another key highlight was the comment made by Prime Minister John Key that New Zealand and Thailand are '*natural partners*.' I certainly share his sentiment: we share many common values, such as those in democracy, human rights, good governance, and the rule of law, but we also have complementary economies in many areas, such as agriculture and tourism. We also have much that we can cooperate in together, and particularly in the areas that were the subject of the two agreements signed during PM Yingluck's visit here in March: firstly, the framework for partnership in education and the second for cooperation in science, technology and innovation.**

**These agreements represent new initiatives; and serve to enhance the areas of competitive advantage of each country and to strengthen people-to-people contacts between the two countries. Since March, Memoranda of Understanding have been concluded between several New Zealand universities and Thailand's agencies which oversee higher education. Such cooperation frameworks will allow a higher exchange of students between both countries, offering both scholarships and opportunities for students to further their education and enhance future careers. Relationships between other New Zealand and Thai universities are continuing to progress.**

**Victoria University and AUT, in partnership with the Devawongse Varopakarn Institute of Foreign Affairs, have since February 2012 jointly hosted more than 120 senior departmental managers from a variety of Thai government agencies, for short-term Advanced Oral Communications Courses. This is a three year programme, which will however be continued further into the future.**

**And the Embassy, in association with Educate Thai New Zealand, an NGO based here in Wellington, sent four experienced primary school teachers from New Zealand to teach English to approximately 3,000 Thai students in 40 schools in Ayutthaya province from June to August this year.**

**Also, ten New Zealand secondary school students from around New Zealand were sent for a three-week experience in Thailand in June this year, staying with Thai host families, and spending their time in Thailand attending local secondary level schools or colleges.**

**I am very happy to note that the businesspeople accompanying Prime Minister Key also achieved tangible success**

during their visit to Thailand. Five major business deals were made, three of them a business partnership with Thai companies, while another two New Zealand companies, Gallagher and Mainfreight, announced their readiness to open office in Thailand.

Cooperation in science, technology and innovation has also been strengthened by a visit from high level scientists and researchers from various Thai agencies to New Zealand in May; and a visit by two top-level researchers from Callaghan Innovation to Thailand in August – on both occasions these professionals in their respective fields were able to exchange ideas and look at opportunities for collaboration and cooperation.

On the regional part of our relationship, Thailand very much welcomed the launch of the '*New Zealand Inc ASEAN Strategy*,' in July. We look forward to increasing interactions with New Zealand, particularly in the business, trade and investment areas, and more so as ASEAN transitions into a fully-fledged single economic community from 2015.

And in 2015 as well, we look forward to celebrating together the Commemorative ASEAN – New Zealand Summit planned to be held in Kuala Lumpur.

Thailand also welcomes the growing opportunities that exist for tri-lateral cooperation with New Zealand: in which we can partner together to provide assistance to other third countries. This is a 'smart power' approach, through which we can achieve much more by cooperating together, rather than by working alone.

This leads me to our cooperation at the multilateral level. Thailand and New Zealand have always shared similar values in global issues, and we have long supported one another to get what we deem important, recognized at the United Nations and

**amongst all nations. It is in this spirit that Thailand has agreed to support New Zealand's role in the United Nations Security Council, as a non-permanent member for the 2015-16 term. New Zealand has certainly proved itself through taking a clear, neutral role in international relations, and has carefully developed capabilities to contribute to the resolution of international problems. We look forward to New Zealand's enhanced involvement through this role in the Security Council.**

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Allow me to bring to your attention, a very beautiful and prominent feature of our event tonight. I am very pleased to welcome here Mr Nigel Godfrey, executive director of Miss Universe New Zealand pageant, Mrs Aloha Godfrey, Ms Evana Patterson, associate director, Jack Yan, General Counsel and some of the 20 finalists of the pageant.**

**Originally, Miss Holly Cassidy, the crowned Miss Universe New Zealand 2013, had intended to be with us tonight, but due to unforeseen circumstances, she was not able to come. But, we are equally delighted to greet some of the finalists who have made it here. Thank you all for coming.**

**These wonderful young people represent another particularly exciting aspect of the Embassy's work over the past few years, which we have termed "*beauty diplomacy*." In 2012, the Thai Government sponsored a trip to Thailand for the top three finalists of the Miss Universe New Zealand beauty pageant; and again in August this year the top twenty finalists went to Thailand – all as 'Kiwi Goodwill Ambassadors' – promoting their own country, as well as themselves, experiencing a bit of Thai culture.**

**Millions of Thais were exposed to New Zealand through these beautiful Kiwi idols on Thai national television as well as magazines. The beauty contestants too, had an opportunity to tell their stories about Thailand, through their personal facebook accounts. At the grand final of the pageant in Auckland in October, coverage of some of the cultural activities in Thailand was broadcasted on television to all New Zealanders. Therefore, this ‘beauty diplomacy’ has indeed brought our two peoples even closer together at an even more personal level.**

**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**This year marks the 57th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations between Thailand and New Zealand and the 51st anniversary of the Royal visit to New Zealand by Their Majesties the King and Queen of Thailand. Their Majesties’ visit in August 1962 was, I believe, the first visit to New Zealand by any foreign Monarch. It helped to cement together the developing close friendship between the two countries; and I am hopeful that there will be another Royal Visit at some time in the future.**

**Meanwhile, I would like to thank all of you for coming here tonight to celebrate His Majesty the King’s 86th Birthday Anniversary and the National Day of Thailand.**

**And I now have the honour to propose a toast to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, to the Government and the people of New Zealand and to the ever closer Thai-New Zealand friendship.**

**To Her Majesty the Queen.**

