

คำกล่าวปาฐกถาของนายกรัฐมนตรี

สำหรับการประชุม International Conference on the Future of Asia (Nikkei Forum) ครั้งที่ ๒๗

หัวข้อ “Redefining Asia’s role in a divided world” (๒๐ นาที ๓,๓๔๙ คำ)

วันที่ ๒๖ พฤษภาคม ๒๕๖๕ ๑๓.๐๐ - ๑๓.๒๐ น. ณ Imperial Hotel Tokyo

(คำแปลภาษาอังกฤษ)

President and Chief Executives of Nikkei,

Distinguished guests,

Konnichiwa!

1. Thank you, Takahashi-san, for the kind introduction.

2. It is my pleasure to join you once again this year at the International Conference on the Future of Asia, at the invitation of Nikkei. Thank you for the warm hospitality extended to me and my delegation.

3. I want to share a few things before I begin. There are several reasons why I decided that I must come to Tokyo and join the Nikkei Forum in person.

4. **First**, as you already know, Thailand has always considered Japan to be a true friend. I just received Prime Minister Kishida in Thailand earlier this month on his official visit. His Excellency’s trip to Thailand and other ASEAN countries reverberates positively across the Southeast Asian region. It is especially important for Thailand, as we commemorate 135 years of diplomatic relations between our two nations

5. **Second**, our two countries have very close economic relations. Japan is Thailand’s second largest trading partner. And our economic ties are growing stronger every day, especially through JTEPA since 2007 and AJCEP the year after. In 2021 alone, Thailand-Japan trade totaled over 60 billion US dollars. Most importantly, Japan remains Thailand’s long-standing leading foreign investor, contributing to almost 30 per cent of the total foreign direct investment (FDI) for Thailand last year. Moreover, with RCEP - the world’s largest mega trade deal to date - we are also witnessing tremendous trade growth among RCEP member countries. Japan has always been a significant part of Thailand’s social and economic development to date. Thailand

expresses its appreciation to the Japanese Government, business owners and investors for having trust and confidence in Thailand. We gladly welcome more investment from Japan, especially in the Eastern Economic Corridor (EEC). At the same time, we have also witnessed a significant increase in Thailand's direct investment in Japan in the past decade, currently ranking second or third among ASEAN countries. We hope to see a steady increase in Thailand's FDI shares in Japan in the coming years, especially in the renewable energy sector. Most importantly, I am certain that Japan will provide the support that our investors need including by maintaining a favourable investment climate for them.

6. **Third**, Thailand is hosting APEC this year, of which Japan is an active member. APEC is at a critical juncture as we start implementing the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 through the Aotearoa Plan of Action, with the aim of paving the way for a sustainable economic recovery for the entire Asia-Pacific region.

7. Thailand's APEC host year also coincides with Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship, and Indonesia's G20 Presidency. It is a rare event where three ASEAN countries are leading three prestigious fora back-to-back. In light of this unique opportunity, the three Chairs are determined to work with all our partners and stakeholders to ensure a spirit of cooperation as we in Southeast Asia continue to strengthen ASEAN centrality, credibility and relevance in maintaining peace and stability in our regional and global endeavours.

8. In this regard, as the current Country Coordinator for ASEAN-Japan Dialogue Relations, Thailand stands ready to work with Japan and ASEAN member countries to further strengthen our strategic partnership, putting people at the centre, especially as we will be commemorating the 50th anniversary of ASEAN-Japan relations next year.

9. And **finally**, we are all in such extraordinary times. Being here gives me the opportunity not only to share Thailand's insight with my fellow leaders, but also to listen to and exchange valuable views with all stakeholders, especially the private sector.

Distinguished guests,

10. Two years ago, we were badly hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, which took its toll on all fronts, at a magnitude never seen before in our time, both in terms of the loss of lives, and

the economic repercussions that followed. Millions suffered tremendous hardship. Back then, travel all over the world was upended, supply chains disrupted, and borders were closed, to hide from an invisible common enemy. As a result, life was thrown into the unknown.

11. As the world slowly recovers from the COVID-19 crisis, we continue to be hit by waves of challenges - disruption after disruption. Fragmentation. Conflicts. Geopolitical tensions. Climate change. Rising poverty and inequalities. High cost of living. Inflation. Fluctuations. - among other things. Some challenges long precede COVID-19 and continue to persist until today.

12. But despite all this, Asia is still expanding and gaining more influence in terms of strategic and economic importance. The world is watching how Asia responds and rises to the challenge. I joined other leaders last Monday at the launch of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), which is another solid proof of how important and relevant Asia is today.

13. Especially at the dawn of this digital era, Asia is booming with cutting-edge technology, like blockchain. Many global tech companies emerged, and more keep emerging, from Asia. And as these new technologies and e-commerce platforms are developing rapidly to solve the problems of the past, digital transformation will be a key driver that shapes the modern society and the highly volatile and fast-changing digital economy. At the same time, we must also acknowledge that digitalisation unavoidably creates higher inequalities both within and among countries.

14. Against this backdrop, the theme put forward therefore couldn't be more relevant today. What can be Asia's role when gaps are growing wider in every aspect? How can Asia contribute to all aspects of peace, security and prosperity? **The answer is simple - Asia must be resilient. Asia must be a strong advocate for sustainability. Asia must strive to become a more inclusive society. The past two years have taught us that resilience to any disruption - and I mean any disruption - is fundamental to sustain ourselves. Growth, once achieved, means little if it cannot be sustained, especially in today's context when growth is so brittle. For these reasons, I strongly believe that economic recovery must go hand in hand with the effort to balance all things and achieve sustainability.** Let me take this opportunity to share Thailand's views on how we can move towards a balanced, inclusive and sustainable growth in all dimensions – social, economic,

and environmental – amidst the numerous existing and emerging challenges we now face, for a brighter future of our Asia and the world.

Distinguished guests,

15. The peace and prosperity we aspire was possible then, and is still possible now. The world needs to move forward. We must not be discouraged by the challenges we face today. Sometimes, these obstacles create a powerful push to cause a change for the better and turn challenges into opportunities. Last year at this very forum, I said that Asia always bounces back. I stand firm by my opinion.

16. Allow me to share with you three things Thailand believes Asia can do collectively to transcend the status quo, while ensuring peace and security in the region.

17. **First, we must regenerate economic growth** by keeping markets open and inclusive. Sustainable economic growth is only possible when we are able to adapt to any disruptions and uncertainties in a timely manner and when the regional and global supply chains are both strong and resilient and always functioning. In light of this, we must continue to support the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, and to safeguard a free, fair, open, non-discriminatory, transparent, inclusive and predictable trade and investment environment.

18. On Thailand's part, we will continue to enhance and improve the business environment to facilitate trade and investment to further increase Thailand's competitiveness. We will ensure an environment that is stable, predictable, innovative and enabling for business owners and investors.

19. To that end, we recognise the need to prepare the workforce and infrastructure that corresponds to the fast-evolving financial and economic landscape, which is a prerequisite to sustainable economic growth – like a house with piles strong enough to withstand any storm. We are upgrading and expanding our rails and airports across the country. Work is also being done to improve communications network and digital infrastructure, including high-speed internet and cloud computing, promote the development of smart cities, and build a high-skilled digital workforce, especially data scientists and cloud engineers, in preparation for a full-

fledged digital economy and the growing realm of the metaverse. As a result, many global cloud computing companies are investing heavily in building data centres in Thailand, making us one of the most attractive regional hubs for cloud computing services. We have to thank Japan for the close cooperation and the assistance it provides, which helps bring Thailand to where we are now.

20. On this note, we are proud that our banking system is one of the most advanced – we are one of the first countries to adopt e-payment system called “PromptPay”, where individuals and businesses can transfer money via mobile applications at zero cost. Services for bill payments, currency exchanges, and personal investment, are also now offered online. What’s more, the PromptPay-PayNow payment linkage between Thailand and Singapore is the world’s first real-time cross-border transfer service. We have also launched similar linkages with Japan as well as Cambodia, Malaysia, and Indonesia. We hope to link our digital payment system with more countries, especially in APEC, as part of our goal to achieve digital connectivity. It is also our goal that the digital economy will make up to one-third of our GDP in the next few years.

21. **Second, we must continue to lend our support to the multilateral system because no one country can tackle these challenges alone.** Thailand remains and will always remain a staunch advocate of the multilateral system, for we strongly believe that doing so is vital if we were to build a community that is conducive for growth, for sustainable development, and for peace. This is because at the international arena, all countries are on equal footing with one another, no matter how big or small. We are ready to do our part to support multilateralism and drive multilateral cooperation to the greatest extent possible.

22. APEC is another forum where Thailand can show our support in this regard. As host of APEC 2022, Thailand is honoured to be steering the work of APEC this year. To be honest, we have our work cut out with the current global situation and the vast economic repercussions it entails, having come almost half way through our host year. But we reaffirm once again our unwavering commitment to ensuring that APEC continues to deliver results and to securing a meaningful and concrete outcome for APEC 2022, for the benefit of all the people of the Asia-Pacific.

23. Since its establishment, APEC has incubated many great ideas and brought creative and practical solutions to many complex problems. The time has come once again for APEC to

unite, demonstrate our leadership and express one voice to address the global economic crisis. Can we continue to make a positive change that will uplift the livelihoods and wellbeing of the people? The institution is already in place, the rest is up to us to decide.

24. Under the theme “Open. Connect. Balance.”, Thailand aims to promote trade and investment that is open to all opportunities, to reconnect the region in all dimensions, and to drive APEC towards a balanced, inclusive, and sustainable post-COVID-19 growth, in accordance with the goals embedded in the APEC Putrajaya Vision 2040 and the ensuing Aotearoa Plan of Action, underpinned by the bio, circular, and green - or BCG - Economy Model as an underlying concept.

25. Under the first priority: Open to all opportunities, Thailand is encouraging APEC to further explore and have a refreshed conversation on the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), through the post-COVID-19 perspective, while taking into account new trade and investment issues such as the digital economy and the environment, among others. Thailand hopes that the FTAAP conversation be taken onward in other host years. Most importantly, liberalisation and facilitation of trade and investment, eliminating barriers to trade and deepening economic integration continue to be the heart of APEC, with the aim of transforming Asia-Pacific into an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful region, as envisioned in the Putrajaya Vision 2040.

26. Under the second priority: Connect in all dimensions, Thailand is aiming to reconnect the APEC region in all dimensions. To that end, we have established the APEC Safe Passage Task Force, whose main work is to find ways to safely and seamlessly resume cross-border travels. Initiatives undertaken aim to address issues relating to, among other things, the interoperability of vaccine certificates, and the expansion of the APEC Business Travel Cards.

27. Under the third priority: Balance in all aspects, Thailand places great importance on achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. One important goal for Thailand is also to ensure that MSMEs, women-led and smaller businesses, who form the foundation of our economy, have greater market and financial access, so that they can increase their competitiveness and have the chance to flourish. In addition, Thailand has proposed the adoption of the APEC Leaders’ statement on the Bangkok Goals on BCG Economy, which will be a comprehensive document that sets the goals and targets for APEC’s long-term work on sustainability, namely on climate change mitigation and adaptation, sustainable trade and investment, and

sustainable management of resources. These align closely with Japan's Green Growth. I thank Japan for fully supporting Thailand's agenda on the BCG.

28. Finally and most importantly, above all, as I have said earlier, under the BCG concept, **Thailand believes that economic recovery must go hand in hand with sustainability.**

Thailand is committed to doing more and doing better. I take this opportunity to invite businesses to come on board in this endeavour because you are the true driver of sustainability who can make real change on the ground.

29. For us, on our path towards sustainability, Thailand is transitioning to clean energy to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050 and net zero gas emission in or before 2065. In particular, Thailand has commenced its transition into EV industry and is building its EV ecosystem. As we speak, "Mission No Emission" or MINE (EV) Smart Ferries ply the Chao Phraya River as we work to decarbonise our river mass transit. Thailand hopes to be one of the world's biggest EV production bases in the near future. Financial and technical assistance, as well as technology transfer and capacity building continue to be fundamental for developing economies like ours to make progress in this area, which requires know-how and advanced technology. We look forward to cooperating with Japan in this and other areas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

30. Asia is a region that is not only vast and vibrant, but also resilient and resourceful, much potential of which is still untapped. It is my hope that all of us remain steadfast, because Asia's strength is solidarity and to grow together, leaving no one behind. Asia is a land of hope. Asia is a place of opportunities. Thailand is doing its part at all levels. Let us join hands to transform our aspirations into reality now, together. We owe our children and grandchildren a world where they can thrive and flourish to their fullest potential so that they can create their own future. It is our job – all of us – together.

31. Arigato gozaimasu. Kob khun krub.

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กองนโยบายเศรษฐกิจระหว่างประเทศ
กรมเศรษฐกิจระหว่างประเทศ