

**Opening Speech by
His Excellency General Surayud Chulanont (Ret.)
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand
at the Thailand-Japan Business, Investment and Tourism Forum
Imperial Hotel Tokyo, Japan, 4 April 2007**

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**Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed an honour for me to be here among such a distinguished group of Japanese and Thai business persons, government officials and media. The warm welcome that I have received throughout this visit to Japan and your presence here today are an eloquent reaffirmation of the strong bonds between our two nations.

The 120th Anniversary of Thailand-Japan Diplomatic Relations is an excellent opportunity for both countries to celebrate past successes and jointly plan our future progress. Many activities are being organized throughout the year in Thailand and here in Japan. But as we all know, the ties between our peoples and our nations date back far beyond this historic date. Our two-way commerce and travel can be traced back 400 years to the Ayudhya period when Yamada Nagamasa, a Japanese adventurer and trader, established himself in the Kingdom and fought for the Thai Monarch. This famous personality has paved the way for countless numbers of present-day business people and tourists from Japan who have had equally fruitful, if perhaps less action-packed, associations with Thailand.

Today, the intensity of our exchanges has greatly expanded. In terms of trade, Japan is the largest source of imports for Thailand. At the same time, Japan is also Thailand's fourth largest export market after ASEAN, the United States and the EU. Our bilateral trade accounts for approximately 16 percent of Thailand's international trade with the world. In addition, Japan has long since been Thailand's largest investor, to the value of some 3.14 billion US Dollars in 2006. In terms of tourism, Japanese tourists are also considered to be the second largest group of tourists after Malaysia, numbering over 1.1 million last year.

These are indeed impressive figures. They reveal our strong inter-dependence. Your task now must be to work on how to improve on them.

**Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,**

The signing of the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement or JTEPA which took place yesterday represents a new era of cooperation between Thailand and Japan. JTEPA will not only bring about greater market access in trade and investment but also technical cooperation in areas such as agriculture, automobiles, textiles and SMEs. As we speak, important initiatives in the various sectors have already been prepared, ready to be implemented.

However, JTEPA's success and the benefits from it will depend on how all of you make use of it. And it is up to you to help us persuade the public in both countries that this is a win-win situation. As for me, I can reaffirm my belief that this comprehensive agreement is one in which Japan and Thailand, as long-term partners, can mutually gain for the benefits of our business communities and consumers alike.

Our Japanese friends can also rest assured that Thailand welcomes and supports all opportunities to promote trade, investment and tourism between our two countries. This trip, I hope, will confirm to you, once and for all, that we are serious about such a commitment. Meanwhile, concrete progress is being made on the revitalization of democracy in Thailand, and I have invited our leading business associations to join you to exchange views on prospects regarding the Thai business climate. So, I am confident that today's event will help convince both Japanese and Thai business people that there remain ample opportunities to strengthen ties and promote our sustainable progress.

I wish you a productive seminar and a prosperous year ahead. Thank you for your attention.
