

**Remarks by H.E. Ms. Penprapa Vongkovit,
Ambassador of Thailand to Israel
At the Federation on Israeli Chambers of Commerce (FICC)
Sunday, 23 June 2019, 10.15 hrs.**

*Mr. Uriel Lynn, President of the FICC,
Mr. Kalin Sarasin, Chairman of the Thai Chamber of Commerce and Board of
Trade of Thailand,
Mr. Adiv Baruch, Chairman of the Israel Export and International Cooperation
Institute,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

It is my great pleasure to meet with the high-level business representatives from FICC as well as the Thai Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade of Thailand on their first visit to Israel. I am also delighted to witness the signing of an MOU on cooperation between the Thai Chamber and the FICC which will pave the way for stronger business relations between the two Chambers.

The Thai business community are well aware of Israel's world class innovative products, and are ready to collaborate with Israeli partners in both trade and investments. Currently, the Thai government is investing in the Eastern Economic Corridor in infrastructure, logistics, and other high value added industries, and will give access to a market of over 600 million consumers in Thailand and neighbouring ACMECS (that is Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) and other ASEAN countries.

At the same time, Thailand offers world class food, health and biomedical products, jewelry, car equipments and parts, and are looking to learn from Israel's experience in research and development.

The MOU between the Thai Chamber and the FICC therefore comes at a timely moment, and I believe that there is great potential for further business partnerships between our two countries, supported by daily flights between Thailand and Israel provided by El Al and Arkia Airlines. I therefore extend my very best wishes for the success of the partnership between the Thai Chamber and the FICC.

Lastly, I would like to thank the Embassy of Israel in Bangkok for cooperation and coordinating this important visit as well as the FICC for organizing this event.

Thank you, Toda Raba.

**Welcoming Remarks by H.E. Ms. Penprapa Vongkovit,
Ambassador of Thailand to Israel
At the Thailand-Israel Business Forum at Sheraton Tel Aviv
Sunday, 23 June 2019, 17.30 hrs.**

*Mr. Uriel Lynn, President of the FICC,
Mr. Kalin Sarasin, Chairman of the Thai Chamber of Commerce
and Board of Trade of Thailand,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

Erev tov, sawasdee ka. A very warm welcome to all of you to the FIRST Thailand-Israel Business Forum in Tel Aviv hosted by the Royal Thai Embassy to coincide with the high-level visit from the Thai Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade of Thailand, with representatives from Ministry of Commerce and Board of Investment of Thailand.

I also would like to thank the Office of Commercial Affairs, Tel Aviv, and BOI of Thailand for taking part and for their support in organizing this Forum this evening.

As I mentioned at the FICC this morning, there is a lot of potential for our business communities to work together. Currently, Thailand is investing in its future with three important policy initiatives:

The first is the Eastern Economic Corridor project – located on the seaboard just to the East of Bangkok – which will become a base of production for high value added industries and a Digital Park.

The second is the ACMECS (short for the “Ayewaddy – Chao Phaya – Mekong Economic Cooperation Strategy”) which envisions linking up our five mainland Southeast Asian countries (that is Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) seamlessly through physical and institutional connectivity.

The third is the “Thailand 4.0” strategy, which aims to upgrade our economic capacity towards high value sectors, based on research and innovation while reaching out to strengthen partnerships in our region and beyond.

Together, these three initiatives will provide a dynamic business environment linking up countries of mainland Southeast Asia and ASEAN, with a combined potential market of over 600 million people.

At the same time, we in Thailand greatly admire Israel's great leap forward with innovative businesses based on research and development, producing many successful startups producing world class products.

As I see it, the only obstruction for further cooperation is the lack of information. Therefore I warmly welcome the signing of the MOU between the FICC and the Thai Chamber of Commerce, which help pave the way for more cooperation between our businesses.

As I mentioned to khun Kalin and khun Uriel, this is a timely present for the 65th anniversary of the friendship between Thailand and Israel this year. Here, I should also mention some important developments in Thai – Israeli relations:

- Thailand continues to be a major destination for Israelis, both for families and young people. Last year in, around 189,000 Israelis visited Thailand, this is three times the number of fifteen years ago in 2003. In the first 4 months of 2019, there has been an increase of almost 7 percent last year, and we are probably on target to welcome over 200,000 Israelis this year!

- This year, we have opened more air services, we now have 9 flights a week between Tel Aviv and Bangkok.

- Bilateral trade is also expanding. It is currently around USD 1.1 billion, and at the Joint Trade Committee Meeting between Thailand and Israel in 2018, both side set the goal to reach 2 billion USD by 2020. The MOU signed this morning can certainly contribute to this goal.

So in conclusion, I hope we can all work together to keep this momentum in our relations going forward; in all areas, not only business, but especially in people to people contacts, education, media, culture and so on. This forum is certainly an important part of this momentum, and I therefore wish this event the greatest success.

Thank you very much, Toda Raba.

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