



“Thailand and Indonesia: The Journey of Relations from Close Historical Ties to Strategic Partnership in the New Normal Era”



*“Besides Bangkok there is nowhere else as good and as friendly as Java.”,
H.M. the Late King Chulalongkorn of Thailand, 1901, the last H.M.’s visit to Java.*

The bronze elephant statue standing in front of the National Museum (Elephant Museum) in Jakarta, a gift from King Chulalongkorn



Thailand and Indonesia are connected by visible and invisible ties. The two countries are not physically located next to each other but share natural boundaries over the sea at the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the north of the Straits of Malacca and in the Andaman Sea. Similarities of hearts and minds of Thais and Indonesians have bonded the two countries together and laid a strong foundation of the long-standing relationship without any historical baggage.

The beginning of the Journey of Relations between Thailand and Indonesia dated back to 1871, 1896 and 1901. Indonesia (Java) was one of the first two countries that *H.M. King Chulalongkorn (King Rama V) of Thailand (Siam)* at the age of 17 chose as his first overseas visit. It also marked the first overseas visit by the Thai King in the history of the nation. Evidence of that historical moment, that was also the beginning of a long-standing friendship, includes the Bronze Elephant Statue in front of the National Museum in Jakarta. The elephant statue was a gift from King Rama V to Indonesia. It is one of the only two elephant statues in existence that King Rama V presented to foreign countries.

With King Rama V’s interest in Indonesian history and culture as well as Batik, His Majesty brought back to Thailand, a collection of 307 pieces of Batik. Over 149 years later, a collection of this Royal Treasure is on display until May 2021 at the Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles in Bangkok. The visits of King Rama V were followed by the visit of *H.M. King Prajadhipok (King Rama VII)* in 1929. Evidence of these visits can be seen at the Royal Inscriptions of King Rama V in 1901 and King Rama VII in 1929 at rocks at the Dago Waterfall (Curug Dago) in Bandung.



King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) and Susuhunan Pakubuwono X of Surakarta (Mataram) at Keraton Surakarta in 1901



King Prajadhipok (Rama VII) and Susuhunan Pakubuwono X of Surakarta (Mataram) at Keraton Surakarta in 1929

Indonesia was among the first countries H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great (King Rama IX) and H.M. Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother paid a State Visit as State Guests of President Sukarno in 1960. One year later, President Sukarno returned a State Visit to Thailand as Royal Guest

of H.M. and once again in 1970. Later, H.M. King Maha Vajiralongkorn Phra Vajiraklaochaoyuhua (King Rama X) paid a visit to Indonesia when he was the Crown Prince in 1986. H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn also visited Indonesia three further times between 1984 and 2016.

The Royal Visits have not only enhanced the bonds between the two countries, but also helped improve the livelihoods of the peoples in both.

The Mae Fah Luang Foundation under the Royal Patronage undertook a crop substitution project with the Government of Indonesia and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in 2006. The project not only helped the communities shift away from illegal cannabis production, but also contributed to the economic recovery of these communities that suffered from civil conflicts and the devastating 2004 tsunami in Aceh.

The “Princess Sirindhorn Project” on Children and Youth Development was initiated by H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. The Project worked with a number of primary schools in Indonesia, which has later expanded to 9 schools in Ternate, North Maluku and Bogor.

In 2018, *H.R.H. Princess Bajrakitiyabha*, as the UNODC Goodwill Ambassador, visited Jakarta to strengthen cooperation among justice and public security institutions in ASEAN countries. The Princess also visited the Women’s Prison in Indonesia and encouraged the Indonesian side to apply the Bangkok Rules for treatment of women prisoners with dignity and understanding.



The State Visit to Indonesia by H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great and H.M. Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother in 1960 as State Guests of President Sukarno

“I believe that happy relations existing between our two countries will continue to grow in strength and should result in complete unity of purpose and in perfect understanding.”
H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej the Great’s speech at the state banquet hosted by President Sukarno



The State Visit to Thailand by President Sukarno as Royal Guest of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great in 1961



Taken from inside the Royal Car, Thousands of Indonesian people lined both sides of the road from the airport to Negara Palace, waving Indonesian and Thai flags at the State Visit to Indonesia by H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great and H.M. Queen Sirikit The Queen Mother to Indonesia in 1960.



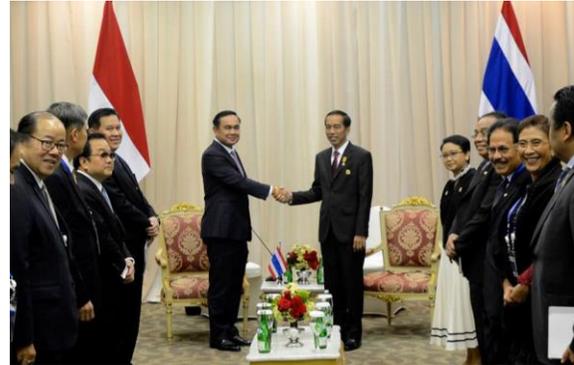
On 7 March 1950, Thailand and Indonesia established formal diplomatic relations. Since then, the two countries have enjoyed close cooperation through exchanges of high-level visits and progress in various areas such as trade and investment, creative economy, defense, fisheries, education, culture and technical cooperation.

The two countries now are each other’s leading trading partners and investors. Bilateral trade last year was above 16 billion USD. The value of Thai investment in Indonesia over the last five years totaled 1.4 billion USD. **Indonesia is the second largest destination for 2,000 Thai Muslim Students**, who shall become life-long Friends of Indonesia and key persons who will significantly strengthen the bonds between the two countries in the future.

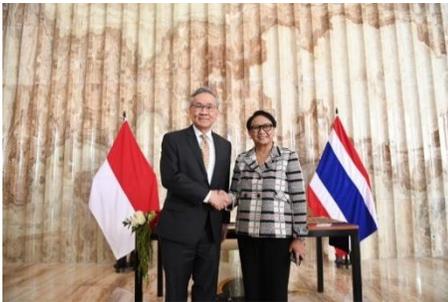
Both sides have created bilateral mechanisms to enhance cooperation in all dimensions, including the Joint Commission (JC) at the Foreign Minister level, the Joint Trade Committee, the Joint Working Group on Fishery Cooperation, the High-Level Military Meeting and etc. At the 9th JC meeting in 2018 in Yogyakarta, both Foreign Ministers committed to strengthening the “**Strategic Partnership**” between each other. The Ministers have constantly exchanged visits and had bilateral meetings including the visit by Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand in August 2019, as Chairman of ASEAN, attending the inauguration of the new ASEAN Secretariat building in Jakarta.



President Joko Widodo's and Mrs. Iriana Joko Widodo's Visit to Thailand to pay respect to H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej The Great on 25 October 2016



The Bilateral Meeting between Prime Minister General Prayut Chan-O-Cha and President Joko Widodo at the Asian-African Conference Summit on 23 April 2015 in Jakarta.



Foreign Ministers of Thailand and Indonesia prior to the 9th Joint Commission Meeting on 6 July 2018 in Yogyakarta



Foreign Minister of Thailand as a Chairman of ASEAN attended the inauguration of the new ASEAN Secretariat building in 2019 in Jakarta.



Virtual Ramayana Joint Performance on “Two Nations, One Dance” on 24 September 2020 to celebrate 70th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations

2020 is the Year of 70th Anniversary of Thailand-Indonesia Diplomatic Relations. It is also the most challenging year because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Both countries organized celebratory events: The Virtual Ramayana Joint Performance on “*Two Nations, One Dance*” was held on 24 September 2020, presided over by the Ministers of Culture of Thailand and Indonesia. There were two Webinars on Thailand-Indonesia Economic Relations held on 26 August, hosted by the Thai-Indonesia Business Council, and on 11 November, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, which was jointly opened by Vice Ministers of both countries.

In the post COVID-19 world and with RCEP as the new regional supporting eco-system, Thailand and Indonesia should grasp this opportunity to reset our relations to forge a stronger economic strategic partnership.

Thailand and Indonesia have enormous potential to build resilient supply chains together, in order to leverage abundant raw materials, manpower and readily available markets.

The two countries can synergize their comparative strengths in such areas as food processing, medical, energy, natural resources, digital economy, bio-circular-green economy, SMEs and human resources development.

Thailand and Indonesia should work together and support each other to proceed along the path to attain their development visions by creating new economic models with new growth engines based on resiliency and sustainability.

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