

**THAILAND UPDATE****Visit of the Special Envoy of Prime Minister of Thailand, Mr. Kiat Sittheeamorn-President of Thailand Trade Representative (PTTR) to Washington, D.C. and New York City, June 9-15, 2010**

- Mr. Kiat Sittheeamorn met with Mr. James Steinberg, Deputy Secretary of State, Mr. Kurt Campbell, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Department of State, Sen. Kit Bond (R-MO), House Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, and members of the US ASEAN Business Council (USABC) and US Chamber of Commerce (USCC). He also held a meeting with the Thai community leaders and had interviews with U.S. and international media. Mr. Kiat provided first-hand information on recent economic and political development in Thailand. The gist of his messages during the visit are as follows:
- **Political Situation in Thailand:** Thailand is back to its normalcy and moving forward with the 5-point reconciliation plan that aims to create an environment conducive to sustained peace and harmony to the nation by reducing conditions that had led to conflict in society such as economic and social disparity. It is also to facilitate the constructive role of free media, establish facts about what transpired during the protests and mutually acceptable political rules, while upholding issues that could unite the Thai people, namely the upholding of the monarchical institution.
- **Reconciliation plan and the way forward:** Currently, the study on how to narrow social and economic disparity within the country, organization of people's assemblies at all levels, and a national survey on people's needs are in progress.
- A committee on reforming the country is on its way, adding that Khunying Supatra Masdit and the United People's Assembly of Thailand were working on the formation of the panel. A detailed blueprint for the reform should be finalized in the next six months and it should not take longer than three years to achieve meaningful progress in addressing the disparity issue.
- With regard to the Constitution and laws related to politics, the PM has issued an order appointing a committee of 19 academics openly to views from the public to work further on the recommendations proposed by the parliamentary committee on constitutional amendments.
- General public are invited to take part in the reconciliation plan through the organization of people's assemblies and national surveys. Civil society organizations would also be asked to nominate persons they deemed appropriate to help steer the overall process, while the Government would stand ready to facilitate the endeavor and provide support.
- **Thailand's economic policies and situation:** Thai economy grew 6% last quarter of 2009 and 12.2% first quarter this year, the best in 15 years and the third in Asia. Unemployment was less than 1% last year. Growth is mostly in export sector. The recent protests and violence had a total cost of 150 billion baht (5 billion USD) on the economy. Factoring in the impact of the crisis, GDP is expected to grow by 4-5% this year. RTG has implemented economic measures to strengthen the economy including income guarantee and debt restructuring for farmers.
- The impact of the recent protests and violence is felt mostly in the tourism sector. Thailand had 14.1 million tourists in 2009. Tourist arrivals are expected to recover soon. There are already increased bookings from certain markets. The RTG has implemented burden-sharing mechanisms to the businesses impacted by the crisis such as arranging temporary space to continue business, authorizing aids to individuals, providing grants, low-cost loans to business and funds to help pay for employee wages and leases.
- **Links to interviews online of the Special Envoy with press agencies:**

1) Interview with Thailand's special envoy (Politico)

[http://www.politico.com/blogs/laurarozen/0610/Interview\\_with\\_Thailands\\_special\\_envoy.html?showall](http://www.politico.com/blogs/laurarozen/0610/Interview_with_Thailands_special_envoy.html?showall)

2) Thai envoy says his country wants to heal divisions before holding elections (AP)

<http://www.newser.com/article/d9g9b18o2/thai-envoy-says-his-country-wants-to-heal-divisions-before-holding-elections.html>

- 3) Kiat Sittheeamorn gives an interview with Washington Times (Washington Times)  
<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jun/13/thai-government-reconciliation-plan-few-backers/print/>
- 4) Thai government tells US it's in charge (AFP)  
<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gnvTrbYKGDZ24RGysSxra2-sRiA>
- 5) Thailand's Kiat Sittheeamorn on Unrest, Recovery and Censorship  
<http://www.youtube.com/user/PBSNewsHour#p/u/8/NlB1i4LMV8c>
- 6) Thailand's Road to Reconciliation (Asia Society Live webcast)  
<http://www.asiasociety.org/policy-politics/news-asia/thailands-road-reconciliation>