

An important partner

By RT HON MARK FIELD MP

MINISTER OF STATE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM



MARK FIELD was appointed Minister of State for Asia and the Pacific in 2017. He was first elected as the Conservative Member of Parliament for the Cities of London and Westminster in 2001. Mark Field served on the Intelligence and Security Committee from 2010-2015 and from 2015-2017 he served as Vice Chairman (International Affairs) of the Conservative Party. He has led parliamentary delegations to China, Japan, India, Bangladesh and the United States.

Rt Hon Mark Field with Prime Minister of Thailand, HE Prayut Chan-o-cha

Ministerial colleagues and I are delighted to welcome His Excellency Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha and his delegation to the UK this month, and repay the warm welcome he has shown us during our own recent visits to the wonderfully diverse Thailand.

The consistent and enduring partnership between the UK and Thailand dates back over 400 years. Our common goals of greater prosperity, security and development, and strong people-to-people connections (not least amongst our Royal Families!) will ensure this partnership persists well into the future. Countless British people have a great love of all things Thai from its natural beauty and history to its rich culture. This is demonstrated by over 1 million Britons making the journey to Thailand each year. We are also pleased to welcome to these shores thousands of Thai people each year to enjoy our culture and history, as well as to do business and study here.

The Prime Minister's visit is a timely opportunity to develop a deeper and more productive partnership on important contemporary concerns including our mutual prosperity, trade and investment, education, regional security and tackling global challenges such as modern slavery and upholding the international rules based system. We believe that the spirit of openness strengthens such cooperation, and we continue to encourage Thailand's return to democracy.

Thailand is the second largest economy in ASEAN and an increasingly important trading partner for the UK. The UK is committed to developing further this partnership, especially as we leave the EU. We look forward to discussing with the Prime Minister how to increase an already thriving trade relationship with a particular focus on aerospace; fin-tech and science technology and innovation. I hope British companies will make the most of the visit to learn

about opportunities to contribute their expertise to the development of its own impressive Eastern Economic Corridor and the wider Thailand 4.0 development plan.

We will also be pleased to discuss how the UK and Thailand can work ever more closely on countering the illegal wildlife trade. This year has seen some positive steps forward in the global fight to protect some of the world's most endangered species: in May our government took the step to introduce the Ivory Bill to fight against elephant poaching which we hope will be on the statute book by October when London hosts an international conference on the illegal wildlife trade. Thailand continues to be an important partner in this work, as the Foreign Secretary saw first-hand during his visit to Bangkok in February. We welcome Thailand's participation in the conference in October.

In the year ahead the UK will open our new state of the art Embassy compound in Bangkok, symbolising our long-term commitment to Thailand, a key partner for the UK's security and prosperity interests and a leading partner in ASEAN.

