

Canada has been a dialogue partner of the ASEAN countries since 1975. Our relationship has been an active one, ranging from political consultations to cooperation in development projects.

During this period, our ties with Thailand have become very strong. We have common interests in security and regional stability -- both of which are essential to trade and growth. We have often worked together in international organizations, bringing a pragmatic and moderating influence to conflicts and controversies that threaten stability.

I should point out that we have also joined with the countries of ASEAN in their principled stand on the situation in Cambodia. We are very much aware of the threat to Thailand's security which the situation poses, and I can assure you, as have other Canadian Ministers before me, of Canada's unwavering support.

Canada also has a strong interest in the steady economic development of ASEAN and, of course, of Thailand. In 1982, Thailand was designated what we call a "core country" for aid, with a budget of more than 15 million dollars a year. Since then, Canada has participated in rural development and poverty eradication programs here. And we have been active in mineral and energy development. We are, for example, financing a half-million dollar feasibility study to employ hydro power at Nan Chern to meet peak hour demand.

We have provided consultants to work with your government's economic planning agencies to help develop policies and priorities. After this luncheon I will have the pleasure of presenting to the Asian Institute of Technology a cheque worth more than 500,000 Canadian dollars for an ASEAN

scholarship program.

We have also discovered in Thailand a new and exciting trading partner. We estimate that the two-way trade between us reached a quarter of a billion dollars in 1985. And that, so far, is a record high.

Our commercial interests, in fact, are remarkably complementary. Canada is a reliable supplier of resource-based commodities such as asbestos, man-made fibres, zinc, aluminum, steel and polyethylene resins. Also successful in the Thai marketplace have been some of our industrial and high technology items: aircraft engines, telecommunications equipment and power boilers.

Up until two years ago, Canada had enjoyed a significant surplus in our trade with you, but the Thai exporting community has now virtually closed the gap. Thai commodities such as fish products, canned pineapple, rice, gems, furniture, clothing and textile goods have found a ready acceptance in Canadian markets.

Through the mechanism of regular trade consultations, moreover, both countries are able to signal their aspirations. Canada sees areas such as telecommunications, energy, oil and gas, mining and manufacturing to be of high potential for us here.

With me in Bangkok is a group of Canadian businessmen who are active in the Thai market. They represent a variety of Canadian expertise. I urge you to get to know them and find out more about the goods and services they can provide. I believe you will find them very competitive. During my visit, for example a number of contract awards to Canadian companies will be announced, with a combined value of more than ten million dollars.