

**JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE JAPANESE AND THE THAI
PRIME MINISTERS ON THE INITIATION OF NEGOTIATIONS
FOR ESTABLISHING THE JAPAN-THAILAND
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT
11th December 2003 In Tokyo**

1. The Prime Minister of Japan, His Excellency Mr. Junichiro Koizumi, and the Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand, His Excellency Dr. Thaksin Shinawatra, held a meeting in Tokyo on 11 December 2003 and discussed the vital importance of establishing a Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Agreement (JTEPA).
2. The two Prime Ministers appreciated the progress hitherto achieved ever since they had reached a decision, at their meeting on 12th April 2002 on the occasion of the "Boao Forum for Asia", that the two countries should begin consultations for the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership in a Working Group (WG) to be set up under the Japan-Thailand Economic Partnership Consultations Meeting.
3. When they met again in Tokyo on 6th June 2003, the two Prime Ministers highly valued the achievements made at the WG (held from September 2002 to May 2003), and decided to mandate the JTEPA Task Force (TF) to carry out the next stage of consultation with the expanded participation from the private and academic sectors, for the purpose of expediting the process for realising the JTEPA.
4. At today's meeting in Tokyo, the Prime Ministers expressed their satisfaction over the works thus far undertaken in the TF (held from July to November 2003) which were well reflected in the submitted report from the TF.
5. The two Prime Ministers emphasised the close economic, cultural and strategic ties between the two countries that have been forged through fruitful co-operation over many years, and recognised with great appreciation that such close ties have offered a variety of mutual economic and strategic benefits and opportunities for the two countries and their peoples. They, therefore, underscored the feasibility and desirability of further strengthening their economic partnership by creating an enduring framework between the two countries in a form of the JTEPA.
6. The two Prime Ministers realised that (a) trade and investment liberalisation and facilitation and (b) bilateral co-operation in various areas to facilitate smooth trans-border flow of resources such as goods, services, peoples and capital would help to create a larger market which would provide greater opportunities and larger economies of scale for Japanese and Thailand businesses. They also recognised that such a partnership would institutionalise regulatory and other policy reforms in both countries, enabling them to stay attractive to foreign direct investment and talent. They expressed their hope that it would have a positive demonstrative impact on other economies, particularly in the East Asia, and that it would develop and enhance the comprehensive economic partnership between Japan and ASEAN.
7. In line with these views, the two Prime Ministers hereby decided that the governments of the two countries should enter into negotiations on the JTEPA and work expeditiously to establish it, based upon the discussions and achievements gained in the process of the WG and the TF. This agreement should encompass the broad-ranging scopes discussed in the TF, while giving due consideration to the need to address the difficulties and sensitivities expressed in its report. They also decided that negotiations should begin in early 2004, and be concluded within a reasonable period of time so as not to lose momentum.