

BACKGROUND

King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand passed away on the afternoon of October 13 after an extended period of hospitalisation. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha announced the King's passing in a televised announcement earlier this evening. The PM stated that mourning will last one year. Flags will fly at half-mast for 30 days, and no festive activities will be held for 30 days. The PM also noted that the government will proceed with the succession, with Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn succeeding King Bhumibol.

IMPLICATIONS

The king's death is a highly emotional event for Thais, most of whom have known no other monarch. The king has been a constant amid the tumultuous economic, political, and social changes the country had undergone throughout the seven decades of his reign, and as a result is widely revered as the nation's ultimate repository of moral authority.

ECONOMIC

The economy will inevitably slow down during the initial phase of the mourning period, which is to last 100 days. Most celebratory events have already been cancelled, and it is likely that many entertainment venues will be temporarily shut. In his announcement last night, PM Prayut requested that economic activity proceed as normal.

POLITICAL

Open political manoeuvring is unlikely to occur, as doing so will be perceived as disrespectful of the monarchy. Similarly, the possibility for an outbreak of political violence is remote.

Policymaking will likely be tempered, at least at the outset of the initial mourning period. Engagements with government officials and ministers on substantive issues should be put on hold, lest such attempts be viewed as insensitive.

PROTOCOL AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Palace will likely make available an official guide on matters of protocol in the coming days. In the meanwhile, it is advisable for companies to remind their employees to dress somberly and to refrain from any activities that may be construed as inappropriate.

We recommend that companies start preparing condolence letters from their senior executives to send to officials and Ministers that they have personally engaged with. Other contingencies which companies may wish to consider preparing for include internal messages to staff in the Thailand office, as well as public messaging where appropriate (e.g. on the company website and social media sites etc).

Best regards,
Hans

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