

EMBASSY AVENUE

Late Thai king honored in Buddhist service

The 100-day Merit-making Grand Ceremony dedicated to His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand was conducted Saturday at The Royal Grand Hall of Buddhism at the Nenbutsumu Sampozaan Muryojuji Head Temple in Kato, Hyogo Prefecture.

King Bhumibol passed away on Oct. 13 in Bangkok. Two days after the passing, the Nenbutsumu Buddhist Sect of Japan, which has close ties with the Southeast Asian kingdom, held a grand memorial service for the supreme guardian of Thailand's Buddhist religion.

The Royal Thai Government, Thailand's Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Thai Embassy in Tokyo, the Royal Thai Consulate-General in Osaka and Nenbutsumu Sampozaan Muryojuji Temple jointly hosted the 100-day ceremony.

The event was attended by some 50 officials from the Thai government, including Deputy Prime Minister Tanasak Patimapragorn, Vice Minister for Culture Chaweerat Kasetsoontorn, Ambassador Bansarn Bunnag, Deputy Secretary-General to the Prime Minister Itthikomn Bhamarasuta and Consul-General of Thailand in Osaka Dusit Manapan.

Following an *oneri* procession featuring about 2,500 people walking toward the grand hall, the grand ceremony was conducted in the presence of about 14,000 people, which included Japanese business leaders and local officials.

"The passing of His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej on Oct. 13 was an immense loss for the Thai people throughout the country, which was filled with great sadness," the deputy prime minister said during the ceremony. "During the 70-year reign, His Majesty had brought tranquility and peace to the Kingdom of Thailand."

Commemorating the late king, he expressed his gratitude to Nenbutsumu for holding the grand ceremony.

Meanwhile, Kazuhiko Hishimura, chairperson of the board of directors of Nenbutsumu, recalled during the ceremony the relations between the late king and the Japanese Buddhist sect, extend back about 20 years.

"In May 1997, His late Majesty granted an audience to a delegation of the Nenbutsumu Buddhist Sect of Japan for the first time. On that occasion, His late Majesty gave his assent to the ideal of the Buddhist Summit that was founded by the supreme Buddhist leaders of the world," he said. The Buddhist



Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister Tanasak Patimapragorn delivers a speech during the 100-day Merit-making Grand Ceremony for His Majesty the late King Bhumibol Adulyadej on Saturday at The Royal Grand Hall of Buddhism at the Nenbutsumu Sampozaan Muryojuji Head Temple in Kato, Hyogo Prefecture. MASA AKI KAMEDA

Summit has been held six times since 1998.

"The close ties between the Kingdom of Thailand, the Buddhist Summit and the Nenbutsumu Buddhist Sect of Japan have developed owing to His late Majesty's sympathy for the protection and propagation of Buddhism based on his deep faith in Buddhism," Hishimura noted.

Following the one-hour ceremony, the Thai dignitaries, temple and Japanese officials

attended a ribbon-cutting event to celebrate the opening of a photo commemoration.

The "Exhibition on the 130th Anniversary of Thailand-Japan Diplomatic Relations — A Memorable Tribute to H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej" is free and runs through Friday at the Sakyamuni Hall in the temple, where the Buddha image dedicated by him is enshrined. The exhibition features about 120 photos memorializing the late king's achievements.