

Laos National Day Special

On 45 years of achievement and growth

VIROTH SUNDARA
AMBASSADOR OF THE LAO PDR



On the auspicious occasion of the 45th anniversary of the proclamation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), on Dec. 2, I, Viroth Sundara, ambassador of the Lao PDR to Japan,

would like to convey the sincere warmest greetings and best wishes from President Bounnhang Vorachit, and Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith to Their Majesties Emperor Naruhito and Empress Masako, members of the imperial family and Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and people of Japan. Please allow me to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the government and people of Japan, my Japanese friends and the Lao people who live in Japan for the immense and invaluable assistance you have given to the Lao PDR throughout the years.

For over 45 years, Laos has continued to enjoy political stability, social order and continued economic growth, which has significantly reduced poverty and improved living standards for all multiethnic people. Since the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism endorsed by the Fourth Party Congress in 1986, the Lao government has been implementing the Five-Years

National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP), which brought significant growth and achievement over the past 34 years. The economic growth maintained a momentum of 6.5 to 8% from 2001 to 2015, averaging a steady increase of about 7% per annum. However, during the current eighth NSEDP (2016 to 2020), the national economy grew at only 5.8% per year.

The living standard of Lao's multiethnic people has been improving. The gross domestic product per capita stood at \$2,025 in 2016, increased to \$2,654 in 2019 and is expected to grow to \$2,742 in 2020. In addition, the NSEDP has also contributed to reducing the poverty rate from 46% in 1992 to around 18%, according to current figures. Hence, in the upcoming ninth NSEDP for 2021 to 2025, Laos will continue to develop its economy in line with a sustainable and green growth strategy, integrate the U.N. sustainable development goals into the NSEDP, as well as build a strong foundation and necessary conditions for the country to graduate from least developed country status in the future.

The coronavirus pandemic is causing great suffering around the world. Nevertheless, Laos has been successful in keeping it under control. This is thanks to the decisiveness, solidarity, and unity of Lao people and government in applying cohesive measures across the nation. That said, global changes, natural disasters and the pandemic are ongoing challenges that severely impact

economic growth which is estimated to decline to between -0.6 to -2.4% in 2020 (approximately 3.3%).

This year is a milestone year, marking the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Laos and Japan. It is also the fifth anniversary of the strategic partnership between our two countries, a solid foundation for continuously building a stronger bond in response to rapid changes in the global and regional landscape and within each country.

The regular exchange of delegations, especially high-level visits, plays a vital role in promoting mutual understanding and trust. A key highlight was the 2012 visit to Laos by the then-crown prince and princess, now their majesties, the emperor and empress. It was a true historical milestone in the history of our two countries. On Aug. 23, during a visit to Laos, Toshimitsu Motegi, minister for foreign affairs, stated that Japan intends to further contribute to creating an effective bilateral plan. Areas include financial stabilization, quality growth and measures against infection, diseases and natural disasters. Japan will continue to support the strengthening of connectivity, including the East-West Economic Corridor. Japan is now Laos' top official development assistance donor and Japanese investment in Laos significantly contributes to the economic development of the country. Japanese companies in Laos have gradually increased in number to

around 296 companies valued at \$373 million that maintain a strong presence today.

I am confident that the relations between Laos and its friends, such as the traditional bond of friendship and good cooperation shared between Laos and Japan, will continue to grow strongly. Once again, please allow me to convey my appreciation to The Japan Times and its readers, and congratulations and best wishes to all Japanese people.

This content was compiled in collaboration with the embassy. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect those of the newspaper.



Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs H.E. Toshimitsu Motegi visited Laos and met his counterpart H.E. Saleumxay Kommasith on Aug. 23.

CONGRATULATIONS

to the Lao People's Democratic Republic
on the Anniversary of Their National Day

JAPAN-LAOS ASSOCIATION

President: Itsuo Hashimoto
Former Ambassador to Lao PDR



Charcoal-Tree Planting Task Force
(特定非営利活動法人炭の木植え隊)

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to the Lao People's
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