

## Laos national day

## Laos and Japan enjoying a path of mutual prosperity

Sithong Chitnhothinh  
AMBASSADOR OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S  
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

The Lao multiethnic people are proud to celebrate the 34th anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR).

On this happy occasion, as ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary of the Lao PDR to Japan, I have the great honor of expressing my respectful greeting and sincerest salutation to Their Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko, all members of the Imperial family, the government and the



people of Japan, and of wishing the friendly Japanese people continuing well-being and prosperity.

On the special occasion of the 20th anniversary of His Majesty the Emperor's enthronement, it is a great honor and privilege for me to extend my wholehearted congratulations to Their Imperial Majesties, all members of the Imperial family, the government and the people of Japan.

The solid political stability and social order in the Lao PDR have provided favorable conditions for national economic development. This year, the government and people of the Lao PDR are implementing the sixth five-year National Socioeconomic Development Plan, 2006-2010,

aiming to build and strengthen the economy and to continue to improve the living conditions of the Lao people. Our socioeconomic development has registered significant achievements as reflected in sustained gross domestic product (GDP) growth of 7.1 percent. The GDP per capita income has increased to \$924 this year. Nevertheless, the Lao PDR has also been adversely affected by the recent global economic and financial crisis at a certain level. This has caused a slowdown in economic development. The growth of the main economic sectors such as industry, service and agriculture has decreased by 2 percent to 3 percent. The trade sector was also affected; exports have

dropped by 28 percent. Against this backdrop, the government of the Lao PDR has undertaken an urgent action by identifying eight measures and 80 priority areas to address. As a result of such action, the Lao PDR has been able to mitigate to a certain degree the adverse impact of the crisis. This year, we are also experiencing the effects of a severe typhoon disaster, inflicting huge material loss on the southern part of the country.

However, due to the uncertainty of today's global economy, the Lao PDR, like other developing countries, remains vulnerable and will still need the support and cooperation from the international community to respond to the crisis, with a view to preventing a long-term impact of the crisis that may occur at any time, as well as to achieve the millennium development goals and the ultimate national goal of bringing the country out of the category of least developed countries by 2020.

Despite having a landlocked status, the Lao PDR is exerting all its efforts to overcome numerous constraints confronting it. Strategically located in the heart of the emerging Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), the Lao PDR has upheld its firm commitment to actively participating in the GMS, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations economic cooperation and the Mekong-Japan cooperation frameworks. To reap benefits from regional and subregional cooperation programs while promoting trade, investment and tourism, the government is pursuing a policy of gradual transformation from a landlocked to a land-linked nation, with priorities given to development of a road transport network, and regional and international linkages including railways. The Lao PDR becomes a key link among the Mekong region countries and Southeast Asia region with the East-West and North-South Economic Corridors. The Lao PDR is an appropriate place for investors who are interested in the field of transport, communications, logistics, and tourism and transit services.

The Lao PDR and Japan have enjoyed long and close diplomatic relations for over 54 years. Japan has always played a significant role in the social and economic development of the Lao PDR. Japan continues to be the leading donor of foreign assistance to the Lao PDR, which covers 26 percent of the foreign official development assistance. Since 1996, Japan's ODA to the Lao PDR averages between \$80 million to \$120 million per year.

From a humanitarian viewpoint and in light of the friendly and cooperative relationship between Japan and the Lao PDR, the government of Japan in October, in response to the Lao government's request for assistance, provided emergency aid equivalent to approximately ¥10 million to the government of the Lao PDR for Typhoon Ketsana disaster victims.

In January, then Foreign Affairs Minister Hirofumi Nakasone visited the Lao PDR and had a bilateral meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Thongloun Sisoulith in Vientiane. In May, Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavanh paid a visit to Japan, attended Nikkei's 15th International Conference on the Future of Asia and had a bilateral summit meeting with then Prime Minister Taro Aso. On that occasion, Prime Minister Bouasone also paid a courtesy call to His Imperial Highness the Crown Prince of Japan. In November, Prime Minister Bouasone also attended the first Mekong-Japan Summit meeting in Tokyo together with leaders of the Mekong region countries and took part in the Laos-Japan Summit Meeting with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama in Tokyo. On this occasion the government of Japan decided to provide a Japanese ODA loan for budget strengthening support amounting to ¥1.5 billion to the government of the Lao PDR. Notes to this effect were exchanged between Katsuya Okada, minister for foreign affairs, and Thongloun Sisoulith in Tokyo.

In October, Internal Affairs and Communications Minister Kazuhiro Haraguchi partici-

pated in the ninth ASEAN Telecommunications & Information Technology Ministers Meeting and its related meetings with dialogue partners in Vientiane and on that occasion he paid a courtesy call to Prime Minister Bouasone.

In terms of the investment from Japan to the Lao PDR - after the entry into force of the Agreement between Japan and the Lao PDR for the Liberalization, Promotion, and Protection of Investment from 2008 and according to the statistics by the Ministry of Planning and Investment - Japan ranks fifth among 38 countries in approved investment in the Lao PDR from 2001 to September 2009 with a total value of \$435.9 million in investments in 10 sectors for 51 projects. The Lao PDR welcomes every business sector and activity not detrimental to national security, the environment, and public health and safety. All investment is guaranteed against expropriation and nationalization without compensation. Remittance of dividends and profits back home or to third countries is allowed through the banking system. Foreign investors have the rights to exercise their land-leased rights and properties. The revised Lao Investment Law was enacted recently.

In March, the first Joint Committee Meeting under Agreement between the Lao PDR and Japan for the Liberalization, Promotion and Protection of Investment was held in Vientiane. In September, Planning and Investment Minister Sinlavong Khoutphaythoune visited Japan and gave a keynote speech at the Lao Investment Seminar organized by the ASEAN-Japan Center in Tokyo with more than 200 people in attendance.

In tourism, the Lao PDR, as Jewel of the Mekong, is a country of an ancient civilization with diverse culture and has many historical heritage sites and charming, beautiful, untouched nature. The country has around 1,500 tourist sites including two UNESCO World Heritage sites: Luangprabang City and Champassak's Vat Phou temple complex. From January 2007 the government of the Lao PDR has



Close ties: Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavanh of the Lao People's Democratic Republic meets with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama at the Prime Minister's Office Residence in Tokyo during his visit to Japan on Nov. 7. LAO PDR EMBASSY

exempted the need of a 15-day visa for Japanese tourists and business people. Since then, the number of Japanese people visiting the Lao PDR has increased by 40 percent. In 2008, approximately 32,000 Japanese visitors went to the Lao PDR. In December, the Lao PDR has the honor of hosting the 25th Southeast Asia Games and 25 sport events will take place in Vientiane.

Next year, the Lao PDR and Japan will celebrate the 55th anniversary of the establishment of Laos-Japan diplomatic relations. Many celebrative events and commemorative activities will be organized in the Lao PDR as well as in Japan. At the invitation of the government of Japan, President Choummaly Sayasone and his spouse will pay an official working visit to Japan early next year.

On this occasion, on behalf of the government and people of the Lao PDR, I avail myself of this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to the gov-

ernment and people of Japan for their valuable assistance, support and solidarity, which proves the excellent relations and lasting friendship, which have so happily existed between our nations.

In my capacity as ambassador of the Lao PDR to Japan, I would like to reiterate my commitment to contribute to further strengthening and enhancing the ties of friendship and cooperation between Lao PDR and Japan, and extend my best wishes for continuing well-being, success and prosperity to all the people of Japan.

In conclusion, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to the well-known Japan Times and all generous sponsors of this special supplement for giving me the opportunity to address distinguished readers of Japan's leading English-language newspaper, and hope that it will contribute to further strengthen and enhance the friendly relations and cooperation between our countries.



Plain of Jars: Archaeological sites containing thousands of ancient vessels are scattered throughout Xieng Khouang province. Because the province was one of the most heavily bombed areas of the Vietnam war, the jars are now surrounded by thousands of unexploded ordnances.

## CONGRATULATIONS

to the Lao People's Democratic Republic  
on the 34th Anniversary of  
Their National Day

## JAPAN-LAOS ASSOCIATION

President: Yoshinori Miyamoto

**Hazama**

HAZAMA CORPORATION

General Contractors, Architects & Engineers



**Japan Radio Co., Ltd.**



**MITSUI & CO., LTD.**

## Congratulations

to the Lao People's Democratic Republic  
on the 34th Anniversary of Their National Day



Ancient city: Located in north central Laos on the Mekong River, Luang Prabang was once the capital of the Lane Xang kingdom and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

## Mutual efforts improve quality of bilateral ties

Yoshinori Miyamoto  
PRESIDENT OF JAPAN-LAOS ASSOCIATION

On the occasion of the 34th anniversary of the Founding Day of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, I would like to express, on behalf of all members of the Japan Laos Association, my heartfelt congratulations to the people and the government of the Lao PDR.

I am extremely happy to note that the very good and friendly ties between our two countries are always intensified by the efforts of the two governments and peoples since the independence of Laos.

It is noteworthy the numbers of Japanese visitors to Laos have been constantly increasing. Especially it may be said to be commemorative this year, because the direct flight entered service between Tokyo and Vientiane for the first time through our history. Although it was chartered flight, it may be said to be symbolic event of development of friendship and inti-

mateness of the two countries. This year too, many high ranking Laotian government officials, including the prime minister and deputy prime ministers visited Japan, and had useful talks with their counterparts.

On Nov. 6-7, the first summit meeting between the heads of the governments of Japan and Mekong region countries took place in Tokyo and they discussed promoting development as well as environment and climate change, cross-border problems such as infectious diseases and promotion of tourism.

I am very happy to hear that Laos is increasing its importance in this region and that the East-West Economic Corridor, particularly the Second International Bridge constructed by Japan-Laos-Thai tripartite cooperation last year, is beginning to boost cross-border traffic of people and goods, and to make considerable contribution to the development in the Indochina Peninsula.

Finally, I sincerely hope that our existing friendly relations will continue and develop further.

## CONGRATULATIONS

to the Lao People's Democratic Republic  
on the 34th Anniversary of Their National Day



**OJI PAPER**



**LPFL**  
OJI LAO PLANTATION FOREST  
COMPANY LIMITED

**sojitz**  
New way, New value

## Congratulations

to the Lao People's Democratic Republic  
on the 34th Anniversary of  
Their National Day

**Sojitz Corporation**

<http://www.sojitz.com/en>