

Laos national day

Investment and cooperation rise as long-lasting friendship grows

Sithong Chitnhothinh
AMBASSADOR OF LAOS

On Dec. 2, the occasion of the 36th anniversary of the foundation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), the day that all Lao multiethnic people are proudly celebrating our National Day, I am very honored to extend, on behalf of the president, government and people of the Lao PDR, our deepest respect to Their Imperial Majesties Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and all members of the Imperial Family, and our earnest greetings and best wishes for happiness and success to the government and people of Japan.

The year 2011 is of great significance for the Lao people as the government evaluated the implementation of the sixth, five-year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) and set up the seventh NSED for 2011-2015, and the ninth Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party and the general election of the seventh National Assembly were held successfully,



Friendly ties: Thongloun Sisoulith, deputy prime minister and foreign minister of Laos, meets with then Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto in Tokyo during his visit to Japan in August. EMBASSY OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

with the result being the reelection of H.E. Choummaly Sayasone as president of the country and election of H.E. Thongsing Thammavong as prime minister. For the last five years, the Lao economy has recorded a steady annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of over 7 percent annually, with income per capita at \$1,069 in 2010. The macro economy is basically stable, livelihood of the Lao people

has been gradually improved and social safety has been secured. The seventh NSED has set up the targets of 8 percent economic growth annually, stabilizing the macro economy, ensuring that the development projects are implemented in a sustainable manner, enhancing rural development and reducing the poverty rate from 26 percent to 15 percent with income per capita at \$1,700 in 2015.

For the success of the main targets, the Lao government needs a large amount of investment, at least \$15 billion to \$17 billion, in which the government investment covers 10 percent, grant aid 20 percent, bank loans 15 percent and foreign direct investment 50 percent to 55 percent, which the Lao government gives priority in drawing domestic and foreign investments by emphasizing the quality of investment on the sectors of industry, service, energy, mining and agriculture, relevant with the importance of environmental and social conservation and protection.

Regarding the ties between the Lao PDR and Japan, last year the two countries marked the 55th anniversary

of the diplomatic relations and cooperation by holding many important events in the two capitals. The two sides have exchanged visits of official delegations of various sectors, from the central government to the social and business levels. This year, H.E. Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, paid an official visit to Japan from Aug. 1 to 4, when he gained audience with His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Naruhito; made a courtesy call on then Prime Minister Naoto Kan; the Hon. Takeo Nishioka, the late president of the House of Councillors; and the Hon. Takahiro Yokomichi, speaker of the House of Representatives; and held bilateral meetings with then Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto, during which the two sides exchanged their views on strengthening the bilateral relationship and comprehensive partnership.

When Japan was hit badly by the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami on March 11, President Choummaly of the Lao PDR sent a message to express sympathy, condolences and solidarity of the government and people of Laos to the government and people of Japan. The Lao government also sent contributions and support donated by the people and government organizations to help Japanese people in the affected areas.

Since the Agreement on Liberalization, Promotion and Protection of Investment between the two countries came into force in August 2008, the investment, bilateral trade and business cooperation of the two countries have increased. Up to now, Japanese investment has invested in 87 projects, with a value of \$548 million, mainly in electricity, agriculture, industry and handicraft, services and construction.

Even though Japan had been seriously affected by the March 11 disaster, the Japanese government kept its continuation of assistance and support to the Lao PDR. During the visit of Deputy Prime Minister Thongloun in August, the government of Ja-



Majestic: Located in north-central Laos on the Mekong River, Luang Prabang, once the capital of the Lan Xang kingdom (14th to 18th century), has been a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1995.

A big thank you to Laos for enhancing bonds of friendship to help overcome hardships

Nobuhiko Suto
CHAIRMAN, JAPAN-LAOS PARLIAMENTARIAN'S FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

On behalf of the Japan-Laos Parliamentarian's Friendship League (JLPF), I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations on Dec. 2, the occasion of the anniversary of the foundation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

This year, Japan suffered tremendous miseries and losses by a series of tragedies caused by the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake, tsunami and severe nuclear accident. Although Japan has experienced natural disasters repeatedly in its history, the recent events were beyond our imaginations.

We thank you, the Lao PDR and the Lao people, from the bottom of our hearts for every support, kindness and encouragement that you have provided to the devastated region and dejected people. We are pleased to inform you that the damaged nuclear plant in Fukushima is going to be stabilized and the local communities destroyed by the tsunami are

making steady advances toward recovery and reconstruction.

In spite of such disturbances, the Japan-Lao PDR relationship has shown steady development this year in various fields.

In August, H.E. Thongloun Sisoulith, deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs, visited Japan on the official invitation of our government and JLPF members had the honor of sharing a pleasant time and space with H.E. Thongloun and his delegation at a luncheon organized close to the Diet. We talked about the future cooperation through our comprehensive economic partnership and the cooperation of Japan, the National Road No. 9 and the expansion of Vientiane Airport, besides the enthusiastic topic of the victory of the Nadeshiko Japan soccer team in the Women's World Cup.

In November, Japan and the Lao PDR held a number of important gatherings, such as the Mekong Forum held in Tokyo and the Japan Festival in Vientiane. Now we are closing this year with a lot of heartwarming and heartfelt occasions, looking forward to having more in the coming New Year!



Shining: Covered in gold leaf, the Pha That Luang stupa stands in the center of Vientiane.

Congratulations

to the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the 36th Anniversary of Their National Day



CONGRATULATIONS

to the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the 36th Anniversary of Their National Day

JAPAN-LAOS ASSOCIATION

President: Itsuo Hashimoto



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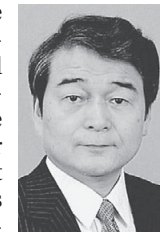


Worship: Built in 1818 on the orders of King Anouvong, Wat Si Saket is a Buddhist monastery temple in Vientiane.

Japan can be proud of support for Laos in its development

Itsuo Hashimoto
PRESIDENT, JAPAN-LAOS ASSOCIATION

On behalf of the Japan-Laos Association and on my own behalf, I would like to extend our most heartfelt congratulations to the government and the people of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on the occasion of the 36th anniversary of the founding of the Lao PDR.



I visited the Lao PDR recently with my graduate students and was strongly impressed by the development it has achieved in recent years. It was an academic mission sent by the Graduate School of Public Policy at Tohoku University for the first time. I led the delegation and was to conduct a study on recent Japan-Laos relations in view of Japan's economic cooperation with the Lao PDR.

The delegation was honored to pay a visit to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Thongloun Sisoulith and other dignitaries.

The warm welcome and very kind words addressed to us illustrated the recent development of the Lao PDR and everlasting good relations between the two countries.

Surely, Japan, both of the government and the people, has always been friendly and meant to be helpful to the Lao PDR and its people. Now that we have seen every symptom of the country's gaining success in its process of social and economic advancement, we feel pleased and are proud of our being sincere friends with the people and the government of the Lao PDR.

Finally, I must reiterate my deepest thanks to the warmest support rendered by the government and people of the Lao PDR to the disaster-stricken people of Japan. We must also remember that Dr. Thongloun, during his visit to Japan in August, and Ambassador Sithong Chitnhothinh visited the disaster areas in person to express their sympathy and support to the people.

I, together with all members of the Japan-Laos Association, wish the Lao PDR and its people peace, happiness and prosperity.

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