

# Laos national day

## Laos-Japan relations, cooperation continue to strengthen in 2012

Khenthong Nuanthasing  
AMBASSADOR OF LAOS

The people of Laos celebrate their National Day on Dec. 2. I would like, on this auspicious occasion, to avail myself, on behalf of the president, government and people of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR), to convey my most sincere greeting and best wishes of good health, happiness and prosperity to Their Imperial Majesties



Emperor Akihito and Empress Michiko and all members of the Imperial family.

It is my great honor to extend warm greetings to the government of Japan, and to take this opportunity to address the Japanese people and friends about the Lao PDR and Laos-Japan relations.

Laos-Japan relations have been strengthened and expanded year by year for 57 years on, since the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1955. The year 2012 has been marked by significant developments. The Prime Minister of the Lao PDR H.E. Thongsing

Thammavong visited Japan two times, in March and April, Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda paid an official visit to Laos and attended the ninth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Vientiane in November and His Imperial Highness Crown Prince Naruhito visited Laos in June for the first time in Laos' history.

The two countries have good cooperation in the bilateral, regional and international arenas. The two governments signed an agreement on a yen loan for development projects in Laos. The Japanese government and people continue to provide assistance to the Lao government and people

in improving infrastructure, human resource development, improving health and sanitation, building schools for Lao children and so on. The number of Japanese tourists going to Laos has increased. To promote Japanese tourism to Laos, Lao Airlines arranged 11 chartered flights bringing Japanese tourists and businesspeople from Tokyo, Osaka and Fukuoka to the UNESCO World Heritage city of Luang Prabang and Vientiane, the capital of Laos. In addition, the fourth Honorary Consulate of the Lao PDR was established in Okinawa and officially opened in September. In order to strengthen the people-to-people relations and to make the Japanese people and children know more about Laos, the Lao government sent eight

Lao elephants to Japanese zoos; those elephants are considered as goodwill ambassador-elephants.

This year has been a historically important one for the Lao PDR. The Lao government and people received the honor and privilege to host the ninth ASEM summit meeting in Vientiane from Nov. 5 to 6. The summit was attended by 11 heads of state and 21 heads of government with more than 4,000 delegates from 49 countries of Europe and Asia and the president of the European Commission, the president of the European Council and the secretary general of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The summit was concluded successfully with the adoption of the Vientiane Declaration and Chair Statement. The

success of the ninth ASEM summit has strengthened the trust and confidence of the international community in the Lao PDR. Thus, the knowledge and image of the Lao PDR has been promoted in the regional as well as in the international arena.

Prior to the ninth ASEM, the Lao PDR hosted in Vientiane other important ASEM sideline events, namely the Asia-Europe People's Forum (AEPF) from Oct. 16 to 19 with the participation of more than 1,500 members of civil society, nongovernmental organizations, INGOs from Europe and Asia; the Asia-Europe Parliamentary Partnership Meeting (ASEP) from Oct. 3 to 4, which was attended by about 1,000 parliamentarians and delegates; and the Asia-Europe



Friendly ties: Crown Prince Naruhito pays an official visit to Laos from June 29 to July 1. EMBASSY OF LAOS

Business Forum (AEBF) from Nov. 3 to 5, which was attended by hundreds of businesspeople of the ASEM partners.

Laos and Japan reached an Agreement on Liberalization, Promotion and Protection of Investment in 2008. Since then the

activities in the fields of investment, bilateral trade and business relations between the two countries have been increasing. However, as an ambassador to Japan, I would like to see more active Japanese investment in the Lao PDR and more Japanese tourists going to Laos.

Laos is located in a strategic, convenient place for doing business because it borders five countries in the region. It is rich with natural resources such as fertile land, minerals, water and forest, giving development potential in agriculture, mining and hydropower.

Laos is yet untouched by the modern demands or stress, allowing peace of life. Its beauty lies in the Lao people, centuries-old traditions and heritage, and its lush, pristine landscape. Please come explore and experience Laos, "the land of million elephants." I would like to take this opportunity to cordially invite the Japanese businesspeople and tourists to Laos.

Despite the global financial crisis, the Lao economy has performed relatively well, and the macroeconomy of Laos continues to witness sustained and sustainable growth. Based on estimates, gross domestic product (GDP) growth was 8 percent for fiscal 2011-2012, with a value of \$8.8 billion. In fiscal 2011-2012, the agriculture and forestry sector saw average growth of 2.7 percent, accounting for 27.7 percent of total GDP. The industry sector grew by 13.5 percent, accounting for 28 percent of total GDP. The service sector also grew by 8.1 percent, accounting for 39.2 percent of GDP.

On Oct. 26, the World Trade Organization approved the membership of Laos, which will become a full member of this multilateral trading body in early 2013. As a result, Laos will have the right to have access to the other 157 WTO members' markets according to their commitments and WTO rules. This access is considerable in the case of more developed export markets.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to all Lao people living and studying here in Japan as well as Japanese friends and supporters of Laos, who have made a great contribution to strengthening the Lao-Japan relations. I thank you all very much and wish you health, success and a pleasant Lao National Day.

### Congratulations

to the Lao People's Democratic Republic

on the 37th Anniversary of Their National Day



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### Promoting greater, growing partnership between our two friendly nations-

Nobuhiko Suto and Yukishige Okubo  
PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT,  
JAPAN-LAOS PARLIAMENTARY  
FRIENDSHIP LEAGUE

In commemoration of the celebration of the 37th anniversary of National Foundation Day of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Democratic Party of Japan and the Japan-Laos Parliamentary Friendship League would like to take this opportunity to extend our compliments on this occasion.

The Mekong River Basin countries where the Vietnam War occurred has experienced an era of hardship.

Laos is no exception, and



Suto

Okubo

through a long civil conflict, the Lao People's Democratic Republic was founded in December 1975 after the coalition government made an end to the system of monarchy.

An open economic system by the guidance of the Lao government created the steady growth of the domestic economy, overcoming the Asian

economic crisis in the 1990s and many more difficulties, and utilizing the resources of minerals and water power.

Recently, ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations), including Laos, has been receiving a lot of attention from the two large countries of the United States and China.

Japan is the largest aid donor to Laos, including technical assistance, since 1990, and many Japanese companies moved into Laos. The Lao people in a Buddhist country are peaceful and friendly to Japan. The current exchange program between the two countries works closer, from top governmental officials to a private-sector level in the

economic, tourism, cultural and many other fields. Those activities create friendship and develop strong ties, a relationship of trust.

With more globalization in the future, we feel that it is important to construct a greater, growing partnership between Japan and Laos.

Lastly, please accept our warmest appreciation for the support and assistance from Laos in the aftermath of the Great East Japan Earthquake in March 2011. We would like to promote friendly relations between Japan and Laos and celebrate the 37th anniversary of National Foundation Day of the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

### CONGRATULATIONS

to the Lao People's Democratic Republic

on the 37th Anniversary of

Their National Day

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