

Laos National Day Special

Rapid, stable economic expansion continues

VIROTH SUNDARA
AMBASSADOR OF THE LAO PDR



On the auspicious occasion of the 44th 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, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and the people of Japan.

Since the proclamation of the Lao PDR in 1975, the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) and the government lead the Lao people by protecting and nation building, as well as developing the country for the past 44 years. The achievements made throughout this time are attributed to many factors, but the most crucial ones are political stability, economic and social order, as well as the captivating beauty of the cultural sightseeing places and the amazing natural scenery. Additionally, under the LPRP policy and the government, the economy has grown rapidly, consecutively and stably over a decade, with the gross domestic product up 6.4 percent in 2019. This has been a fundamental factor in fostering socioeconomic development.

The government continues to restructure the Lao economy through industrialization and modernization via environmentally friendly technologies in the agricultural, industrial and service sectors, as well as deepening regional and international inte-

gration and constructing strategic, basic infrastructure to accelerate national economic growth, including the China-Laos railway project set for completion in 2021. Also, there is a railway project that departs from Vientiane to Khammouane province that then passes through Vietnam's Ha Tinh province and connects through the country's Vung Ang sea port. The Japanese government also provided support and assistance on a feasibility study of the Vientiane-Hanoi highway construction and renovation of Wattay International Airport.

Additionally, in terms of investment, the Lao government also amended investment promotion laws, specifically, the policies, principles and rules to provide a convenient, fast, transparent and equal environment for foreign investors. It also amended property and labor laws, and issued a decree on the establishment of the promotion and protection investment committee at the central and local levels; as well as implementing a single-window service.

In the cultural and society sector, Laos

has a diverse and unique civilization, culture and tradition and beautiful nature that await tourists from around the world. These include the three World Heritage sites of Luang Prabang, Vat Phou Champasak and Xiengkhuang Plain of Jars. Other cultural and natural attractions include the voice of *khen* (a traditional music instrument), Khonphapeng Waterfall in Champasak province, cruising along the Mekong river and so on. Some places have come to symbolize the Lao PDR, such as That Luang Stupa, Emerald Temple and other temples.

On bilateral relations between Laos and Japan, the two countries have long had traditional bonds of friendship and good cooperation. Our governments and people continue to strengthen such friendly ties every year, upgrading that cooperation into a strategic partnership in 2015. People at all levels regularly exchange visits. Furthermore, the visit by then-Crown Prince Naruhito in 2012 and several visits by then-Prince Akishino marked significant contributions and solid fundamentals to the traditional

bond of friendship.

Laos and Japan are close friends and there is consistent support via official development assistance from Japan. This mainly goes to infrastructure development, health services, education and human resource development, agriculture, forestry and other areas. One such symbolic project that benefitted from the financial assistance was the Wattay International Airport Terminal Expansion project. On behalf of the Lao Government and people, I would like to express my sincere appreciations and profound gratitude to the assistance extended by the government and people of Japan in the past years, and hope for the continued support and contribution to the Lao national development in various areas in the future.

Japanese investment in Laos significantly contributes to the economic development of the country. Japanese companies in Laos have gradually increased and maintained a strong presence in 2019, with around 162 companies valued at \$159 million. Almost all major Japanese investors are based in the



Ministers of Laos and Japan conduct the hand-over ceremony of Wattay International Airport Terminal in Vientiane in August 2018. Expansion of the terminal was supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. JICA LAOS OFFICE

country's special economic zones, particularly the Savan-Seno Special Economic Zone, the Pakse-Japan SME Special Economic Zone and Vientiane Nonthong Industry and Trade Park.

March 5, 2020, marks the 65th anniversary of our establishment of diplomatic relations. Next year will see both our countries jointly organize activities and programs to celebrate this important event throughout the year, one being the Lao Festival that will be held on May 30 and 31, 2020, in Tokyo's Yoyogi Park. I would like to take this opportunity to

invite people to come visit our festival that marks its 10th anniversary next year.

I am confident that this article will make our Japanese friends understand more about Laos and the traditional bond of friendship and cooperation between our countries. Besides, I would like to take this opportunity to invite our Japanese friends to visit and explore Lao culture, traditions and nature, and invest or start businesses in Laos. Lastly, in promoting Lao tourism, the government has exempted visas for Japanese to visit Laos to widen the cooperation of our countries.

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

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

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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



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TOYOROZAI CO.,LTD.

President & CEO
Hiroki YAMAMURA

12-1 Okawa-cho, Kawasaki-ku, Kawasaki, Kanagawa
TEL: +81-(0)44-333-8444 FAX: +81-(0)44-333-8445
<http://www.touyourozai.jp>