

Japan supports ASEAN's efforts to enhance connectivity and resilience



Advertorial Desk

I would like to congratulate the Lao PDR for hosting the ASEAN Ministerial Meeting and related meetings. After my visit last October, I am very pleased to pay another official visit to this beautiful country on this occasion.

Japan and ASEAN countries, of which Laos is a member, have built a relationship as trusted partners through years of cooperation and exchange in a wide range of fields.

Last year, Japan welcomed Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone and other leaders of ASEAN Member States to Tokyo for the Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of ASEAN-Japan Friendship and Cooperation.

At this Special Summit, leaders from Japan and ASEAN members adopted a joint vision statement based on three pillars: "Heart-to-Heart Partners across Generations," "Partners for Co-creation of Economy and Society of the Future", and "Partners for Peace and Stability".

At the upcoming ASEAN-Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting, we would like to review the steady progress of cooperation under this new vision set forth by our leaders and reaffirm our commitments to further strengthen cooperation among us.

In particular, Japan



strongly supports the theme "Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience" put forward by the Lao PDR as the Chair of ASEAN.

Under the Japan-ASEAN Comprehensive Connectivity Initiative, concrete cooperation projects, such as the Monsoon Wind Power Project for promoting cross-border electricity supply from the Lao PDR, are currently underway.

Japan will continue to strengthen cooperation that contributes to ASEAN's connectivity, resilience, and community vision in a wide range of areas, including green transformation; digital transformation; culture and the arts; the environment; women, peace, and security; health; and human resource

development.

Japan-Laos relations have been steadily developing since last year. During the Lao PDR's tenure as ASEAN Chair this year, many Japanese dignitaries have visited Laos and reaffirmed the continuation of cooperative relations in various fields.

I myself have already had three meetings with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Saleumxay Kommasith since I became Minister for Foreign Affairs last year.

With a view to further advancing the Strategic Partnership between our two countries, I look forward to having another frank and constructive exchange of views on Laos' economic and social development, ASEAN-Japan cooperation, and regional and

international affairs.

We are committed to continuing to support Laos in addressing its development challenges, including its debt problems, in cooperation with the international community.

In the first quarter (January-March) of Visit Laos Year 2024, the number of foreign tourists who visited Laos exceeded 1.1 million, a 36 percent increase compared with the previous year. We would like to work together in promoting tourism between Japan and Laos to ensure that this trend continues.

I also recently learned that the traditional Lao textile motif of the dragon god, Naga, has been inscribed by UNESCO as a form of World Intangible Cultural Heritage. I would like to congratulate the

people of Laos for securing international recognition of their rich culture and traditions, which have been handed down from generation to generation by Lao women.

Next year's 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Laos and Japan will be an extremely important milestone in our bilateral relations. Next year is also the year of the Osaka-Kansai Expo, and we welcome Laos' participation.

We also look forward to welcoming Lao dignitaries to Japan in the coming years, especially for this memorable year, and to expanding government-to-government and party-to-party exchanges.

Cultural and people-to-people exchanges are

the foundation of friendly relations between our two countries and I hope that exchanges at various levels will become even more active.

I am particularly pleased to see that former students who studied in Japan are playing active roles in various fields as cabinet ministers among other key leadership roles. In the future, we would like to further promote our cultural and youth exchanges with the people of Laos.

We would like to continue to work closely with the Lao PDR to take the Strategic Partnership between our two countries to new heights and build our future together. I sincerely hope that our friendship based on mutual understanding and respect will continue for many years to come.