



Japanese cherry blossoms (sakura) at the Lao-Japan Friendship Sakura Park in Viengxay district, Huaphan province.

Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa's comments on her visit to Laos

Hello and warm greetings to the Lao people. I am visiting Laos and three other Southeast Asian countries as my first bilateral visits after assuming the position of Minister for Foreign Affairs on September 13. Laos, a beautiful country with rich nature and abundant natural resources, is a country I have wanted to visit for a long time.



Laos and Japan have a long history of trust and friendship and share common values and principles. Japan, in fact, may be one of the most familiar countries for Lao people. The Lao 10,000 kip banknote depicts the Pakxe Bridge, which was constructed with Japanese grant aid. The Nam Ngum Dam, completed in 1971 and also depicted on your national emblem, which is Laos' representative hydroelectric power development project aiming to become the "Battery of Southeast Asia", has also been supported by Japan. Furthermore, I heard that the Vientiane No.1 Road connecting Wattay Airport and the Lao-Thai Friendship Bridge, which Japan assisted constructing, has been highly appreciated by Lao people for high quality because of the consideration of the urban environment, protection of cultural assets and for the fact that it has not deteriorated over the years. We are honored that Japan has been working with Lao people for the development and growth of Laos.

I am aware that Laos is aiming to develop from a landlocked country to a connected country in the region, and that Laos will work on the theme of "Enhancing Connectivity and Resilience" as the Asean Chair next year. Japan has been supporting Laos, not only in infrastructure development contributing to strengthening connectivity, but also in a wide range of areas such as human resource development, education, health, legal system development, financial stabilization, and UXO removal, thereby contributing to robust, sustainable, and self-sustaining socio-economic development.

Laos was the first country to which Japan dispatched Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV) in 1965. Laos's first Civil Code, which came into effect in May 2020, is also the culmination of nearly 20 years of cooperation between Laos and Japan in the development of the legal system. As Minister of Justice at the time, I was involved in supporting the preparation of this Civil Code. In the future, we would like to expand our cooperation with Laos in new areas such as climate change, clean energy, and digital technology, in addition to our existing areas of collaboration. Japan will continue to work together with Laos to the fullest

Japanese Foreign Minister Kamikawa Yoko.

extent feasible so that Laos can fully realise its potential and the Lao people can enjoy the fruits of our cooperation.

Today, more than 160 Japanese companies are operating business in Laos. Japanese companies in Laos have contributed to the sustainable development of the Lao economy by creating local jobs and developing human resources through transferring production technology, management know-how, and other skills. At the same time, there is still a lot of potential for Japanese investment in Laos, and we would like to work closely with Lao people to further expand investment.

High-level visits and other people-to-people exchanges between our two countries are also becoming more and more active. In recent years, the number of Japanese language learners in Laos has increased significantly, and youth exchange is becoming more and more active through such as study abroad programs and JENESYS. We would like to further deepen the ties with Lao people as true friends connected "heart to heart."

This year marks the 50th Year of Asean-Japan Friendship and Cooperation. In December, when the buds are unfurling on the Japanese cherry blossom trees in the Laos-Japan Friendship Sakura Park in Huaphan province, The Commemorative Summit for the 50th Year of Asean-Japan Friendship and Cooperation will be held in Tokyo. Japan has supported Asean countries' development while standing by Asean for a long time and deepened the relationship of mutual trust. We regard the Commemorative Summit meeting as an invaluable opportunity for Japan and Asean to jointly set out the direction of the future of Asean-Japan relations and new visions for cooperation looking ahead to shared challenges, based on the valuable asset of cooperation. In addition, Laos will assume the Asean chairmanship next year, and Laos and Japan will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2025. We would like to further cooperate with you in order to seize these opportunities to further strengthen the Asean-Japan relationship and also to take our bilateral "strategic partnership" to new heights. As Minister for Foreign Affairs, I will make my utmost efforts to develop friendly relations between our two countries, hand in hand, as reliable partners who will lead the new era. I look forward to working together to create a free and open international order based on the rule of law and a sustainable and prosperous future for the Indo-Pacific and the entire world.

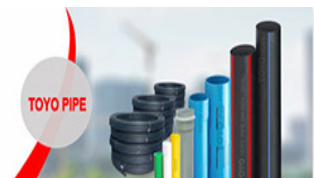


More than 2,200 Lao young people have been to Japan for exchanges since JENESYS's establishment in 2007.

By Advertorial Desk
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