

# Vientiane Times

The First National English Language Newspaper

WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 2006

ISSUE 84

3000 kip



Mr Bounnhang (left) greets Mr Ito.

## Japanese delegation monitors project progress

□ SOUKSAKHONE VAENKEO

A JAPANESE delegation has paid a three-day visit to Laos to monitor the progress of Japanese aid projects.

The delegation was led by a member of the Lower House of the Japanese government, also the President of the Special Committee for Overseas Cooperation of the Liberal Democratic Party, Mr Tatsuya Ito.

The visit from April 30-May 2 was made to inspect the progress of projects funded by the government of Japan and to determine whether or not they have been implemented effectively and in line with expectations.

He said that since last year, his government had discussed ways to provide help for each ASEAN member country.

"As Laos has just adopted a national strategy plan on socio-economic development, we hope to further cooperation and aid to Laos," said Mr Ito. In the next three years, Japan has agreed to provide Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia with aid worth US\$1.5 billion, as agreed by the Japanese Prime Minister, Junichiro Koizumi.

The delegation called on Prime Minister Bounnhang Vorachit, the President of the Committee for Planning and Investment, Dr Thongloun Sisoulith, and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Somsavat Lengsavad.

During his talks with the Prime Minister, Mr Ito said that ASEAN member countries were very meaningful for Japanese diplomatic strategy. In particular, the sustainable development of these countries was important in creating regional links.

"I am pleased that the government of Japan has provided help to ASEAN member countries, especially the three new members - Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia," said Mr Bounnhang. He

noted that the standard of living of people in the development triangle encompassing Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia was very low.

Infrastructure in the area faces severe shortages, such as hospitals, schools and roads, although the Lao government is now focussing on construction of Road 18B linking Laos to Vietnam, he added.

"The contribution of Japan is very important in the socio-economic development of Laos," said the Prime Minister.

He mentioned the Namngun I dam as one example of the Japanese government's assistance. The dam serves domestic needs and also exports hydropower, which generates income for the country.

Thanks to Japanese aid, particularly in education, more children in rural and remote area now have access to education, observed Mr Bounnhang.

"The support of Japan also extends to the achievements of the National University of Laos, where Japanese volunteers have transferred their technical skills to Lao staff very efficiently," he added.

Mr Bounnhang said he highly valued the enormous assistance of the Japanese government and was committed to using grant money effectively for the benefit of Lao people.

On behalf of the government and Lao people, Mr Bounnhang extended his thanks for the generous assistance of the Japanese government and people in the past and in the future.

He also extended his greetings to the Japanese Prime Minister and National Assembly.

"On behalf of the National Assembly and the government of Japan I express commitment to carrying out the effort to strengthen the relationship between our two nations," said Mr Ito.