



Together toward the future,

Mekong and Japan

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan

Mekong and Japan



Japan consistently places great importance on the Mekong Region and continues to play an active role in order to strengthen the relationship between Japan and the Mekong Region Countries. Reaffirming our commitment to the "Region of Hope and Development," we continue to promote cooperation between Japan and the Mekong Region Countries as well as in the international arena under the keywords of "trust," "development" and "stability." With this in mind, Japan continues to put efforts in development that organically links Official Development Assistance (ODA) with promotion of trade and investment as well as activities linking the public and private sectors.



Establishment of diplomatic relations

- 1887  Japan-Thailand
- 1953  Japan-Cambodia
- 1955  Japan-Myanmar
- 1955  Japan-Laos
- 1973  Japan-Viet Nam

History

Around the 8th century, contact with Viet Nam began when a ship carrying Japanese envoys to China was caught in a raging storm and washed up on the Indochina Peninsula. From 600 years ago, lively trade was conducted with the countries of Southeast Asia. Many Japanese emigrated to the Mekong Region after the Japanese shogunate government started issuing trade licenses (shogunate-authorized overseas travel permits) to trading vessels during the Edo era. The system of authorizing trading vessels later fell into disuse due to the Edo shogunate government's isolationist policies, but trade recommenced in the late 19th century during the Meiji period. The first treaty with Southeast Asian countries, the Declaration of Amity and Commerce between Japan and Siam, was signed in 1887. The region was plunged into an unfortunate time of war, but diplomatic ties with Mekong Region Countries were later revived in conjunction with Japan's reinstatement to the international community after the war ended in 1945. Contact with Mekong Region Countries intensified after the war as the Japanese government furnished ODA and Japanese companies' investment increased in the region.

Strengthening ties

Japan continues to take the initiative role in strengthening ties with the Mekong Region. Through expansion of ODA and recently through the signing of bilateral economic partnership agreements and investment agreements, Japan contributes to the development in the Mekong Region, which in the end will be of direct benefit to ASEAN, and to the prosperity and stability in East Asia.

First Japan-Mekong Foreign Ministers' Meeting Held in January 2008

The foreign ministers of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam gathered in Tokyo on January 16, 2008, to hold the first-ever Japan-Mekong Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The conference's themes were "trust," "development" and "stability." The conference's resolutions and declarations covered a wide range of topics, but the announcement that Japan would expand ODA based on the Japan-Mekong Region Partnership Program and that Japan would provide an additional US\$20 million to assist in improving the efficiency of distribution along the east-west and southern economic corridors was particularly noteworthy.



Japan-Mekong Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Jan 2008, Tokyo)

Mekong-Japan Exchange Year 2009

At the Japan-Mekong Foreign Ministers' Meeting, it was also decided that exchanges in a range of sectors, including the areas of politics, economics, culture, and tourism, would be promoted during the Mekong- Japan Exchange Year in 2009. Partnerships between Japan and Mekong Region Countries are growing stronger in many levels, both private and public. Japan and the Mekong Region are now entering a new era of cooperation.



Mekong-Japan Exchange Year Opening Reception (Jan 2009, Tokyo)

Promotion of partnership

Nov 2004	1st Japan-CLV Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Vientiane)
Nov 2004	Japan-CLV Summit (Vientiane)
Dec 2005	2nd Japan-CLV Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Kuala Lumpur)
Dec 2005	Japan-CLV Summit (Kuala Lumpur)
Jan 2007	3rd Japan-CLV Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Cebu)
Aug 2007	4th Japan-CLV Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Manila)
Nov 2007	Japan-CLV Summit (Singapore)
Jan 2008	Japan-Mekong Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Tokyo)
July 2008	5th Japan-CLV Foreign Ministers' Meeting (Singapore)

(CLV: Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam)

Forming links with the Mekong

Various areas in the Mekong Region that had not been previously linked together are now truly trying to link up via three economic corridors developed by Japan and other Mekong regional development programs. Great hopes for future growth are now beginning to sprout in the Mekong Region as more goods and people flow than ever before.

South-North Economic Corridor

Starting at Kunming, in Yunnan Province in China, this corridor is split into two routes: one goes to Bangkok, Thailand, and the other is linked to Hanoi, Viet Nam.

East-West Economic Corridor

This corridor links areas between Mawlamyine in Myanmar, and Da Nang in Viet Nam, by way of northeast Thailand and Savannakhet, in Laos. The Japanese government built the Second Mekong International Bridge in December 2006 and pledged to provide an additional aid of US \$20 million to improve the efficiency of logistics and distribution of the east-west and southern economic corridors at the Japan-Mekong Foreign Ministers' Meeting in January 2008.

Southern Economic Corridor

This corridor, which is a part of the Asian Highway, links between Bangkok, Thailand and Ho Chi Minh City, Viet Nam through the capital of Cambodia. It lags behind in construction compared to the other two corridors, but expectations are that this corridor will be a substantial economic and industrial artery when completed.

Road No.9

Hai Van Tunnel

Development Triangle

In order to assist the underdeveloped regions along the borders of Cambodia, Laos and Viet Nam, the Japanese government announced at the December 2005 Japan-CLV Summit that it would provide a total of JP¥2billion in FY2005 in ODA as a form of cooperation; this was followed by another announcement at the January 2007 Japan-CLV Foreign Ministers' Meeting that US \$20million in assistance would be granted through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF).

Second Mekong International Bridge

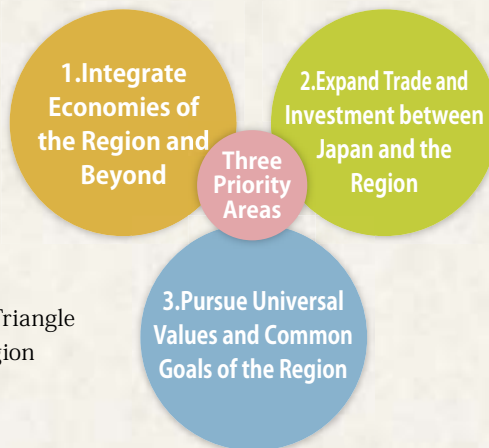
Japan-Mekong Region Partnership Program

Three Goals

- Enhanced Japan-Mekong Region partnership
- Sustainable economic growth of the Mekong Region
- Life with dignity for the people in the Mekong Region and fulfillment of their potential

Three New Initiatives

- Expansion of ODA to the Mekong Region / Assistance to the Development Triangle and promotion of efficiency of logistics and distribution in the Mekong Region through the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund (JAIF)
- Bilateral Investment Agreements with Cambodia and Laos
- Japan-Mekong Region Ministerial Meeting



Linking to the future

Economic relations between Japan and Mekong Region Countries have become ever closer since the announcement of the Japan-Mekong Region Partnership Program. Particularly, Japan has entered into Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) or investment agreements with Mekong Region Countries, and there have been remarkable developments in the evolution of these partnerships. Japan and the Mekong Region have begun to move forward together toward a future of hope and growth.

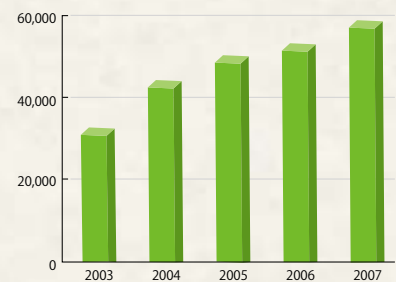
■ Polygonal line graph indicates Japan's Trade Value
 ■ Bar graph indicates Japan's FDI

(Source : ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE)

Data on Japan-Mekong relation

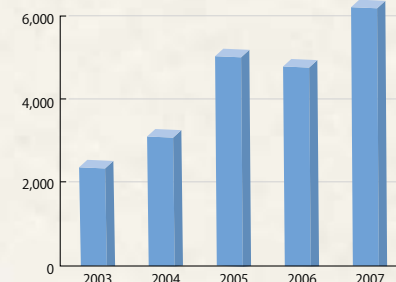
Total Trade Value

(Unit : Million USD)

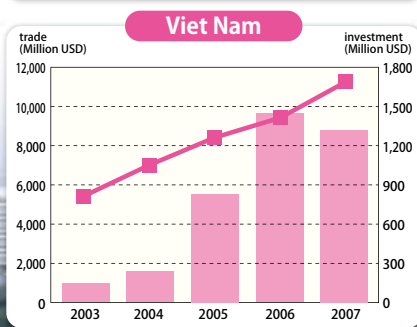
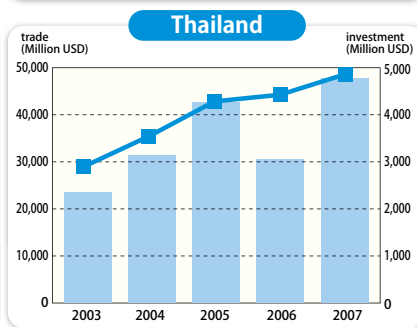
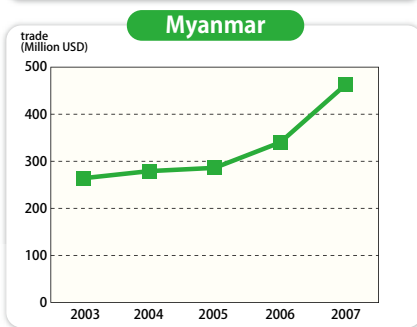
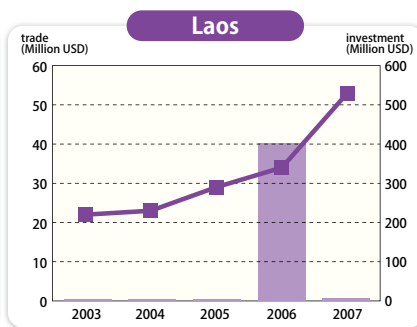
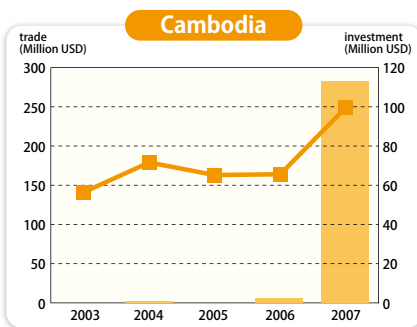


Japan's FDI in Mekong Countries

(Unit : Million USD)



(Source : ASEAN-JAPAN CENTRE)



Economic and Investment Agreements between Japan and Individual Mekong Region Countries

- Japan-Thailand EPA November 2007
- Japan-Cambodia Investment Agreement July 2008
- Japan-Laos Investment Agreement August 2008
- Japan-Viet Nam EPA December 2008 (signed)

Joint Efforts by Governments and Private Sectors to Improve the Business Environment

- Japan-Viet Nam Joint Initiative to Improve Business Environment April 2003~
- Japan-Lao Public and Private Sectors Dialogue December 2007~

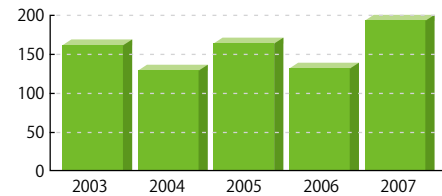
Assisting the Mekong Region

Japan supports the Mekong Region in diverse sectors through Official Development Assistance (ODA), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and other forms of cooperation.

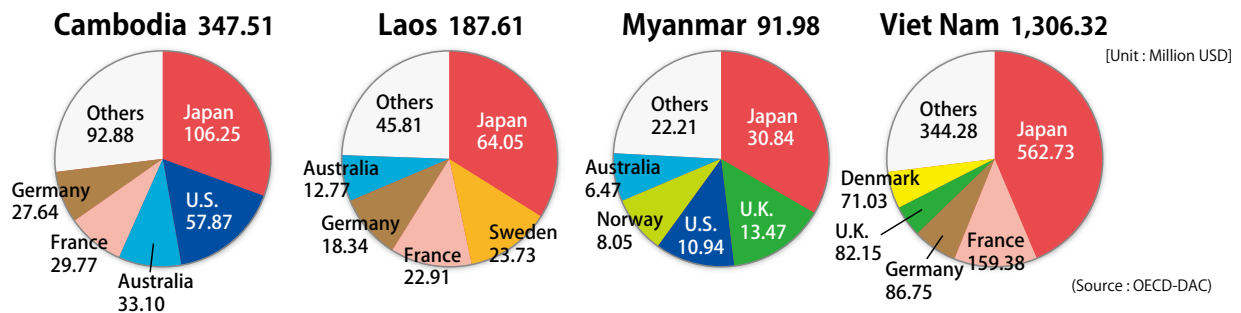
The partnership between Japan and the Mekong Region has become even stronger through such efforts. This is an asset that Japan and the Mekong Region share and should serve as a signpost to a more prosperous future.

Japan's ODA to the Mekong Region

(Unit: Billion JPY)



Amount of DAC Countries' ODA Disbursements (2006)



Cambodia

Since 1999, Japan has assisted Cambodia in developing legal systems necessary to establish the rule of law in the country. Japan provided technical cooperation in drafting the civil code and the code of civil procedure and continues to support capacity building of legal and judicial experts.



Laos

Japan has provided grant aid for the project for the improvement of the Vientiane No.1 Road, a trunk line of the capital that connects the road network in the region.



Myanmar

In response to Cyclone Nargis which hit Myanmar and claimed over 84,000 lives, Japan dispatched a Japan Disaster Relief Medical Team, which treated 1,202 people in the worst-affected Ayeyarwaddy Division.



Thailand

Japan has provided ODA loan in developing the Mass Rapid Transit System (Blue Line and Purple Line) to relieve traffic congestion in Bangkok and to improve the urban environment through reduction of vehicle exhaust fumes and greenhouse gas emissions.



Viet Nam

In order to prevent high risk epidemic such as avian influenza, Japan provided grant aid and technical cooperation to improve bio-safety laboratories of the National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE). NIHE is expected to play a role as a core research institute to tackle infectious diseases in the Mekong Region.



Cultural ties

Cultural exchanges between Japan and Mekong Region Countries are flourishing. Also, Japan is actively helping these countries protect their rich cultures and valuable heritages.



Cambodia



The Japanese Government Team for Safeguarding Angkor was formed in 1994. Over 700 Japanese specialists have been sent to help restore heritage sites in cooperation with Cambodian experts.



Laos



Through the Grant Assistance for Cultural Grassroots Projects in FY2006, Japan helped Laos build a traditional culture education center (completed in 2008).



Myanmar



A presentation on Japanese anime (animation film) in Yangon attracted many enthusiastic anime fans and animators.



Thailand



Goodwill ambassador Hideki Togi, a traditional court music player, staged a concert at Thailand's Wat Arun to commemorate the 120th anniversary of Japan-Thailand Diplomatic Relations.



Viet Nam



Large-cultural events were held in Viet Nam and Japan in 2008 to commemorate the 35th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic relationship.





Mekong-Japan Exchange Year 2009



Join Us!

During the "Mekong-Japan Exchange Year 2009," various events such as political dialogue, economic, cultural and youth exchanges and promotion of tourism will be held both by the public and private sectors. Join us in bringing success to the Mekong-Japan Exchange Year!

<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/mekong/exchange.html>



JENESYS Programme

(Japan-East Asia Network of Exchange for Students and Youths)



The objective of the JENESYS Programme is to help lay the foundation for a common future vision and solidarity in East Asia in the 21st century and to promote mutual understanding among the younger generation in the region through youth exchange. At the 2nd East Asia Summit (EAS) held in 2007, the then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan announced a US \$315 million youth exchange initiative that would invite approximately 6,000 youths annually, mainly from EAS member countries, to Japan over the next five years. Through the programme, Japan intends to receive around 5,000 youths from the Mekong Region Countries in five years.

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