



## **Press Release**

### **Japanese Foreign Minister Visits Laos**

Vientiane, May 5, 2016

H.E. Mr. Fumio Kishida, Minister for Foreign Affairs, visited the Lao People's Democratic Republic from 4 to 5 May.

Recently cooperative relations between Japan and Laos have been deepening in various ways, thorough economic cooperation projects and human resource development as well as youth exchange programs and investment by Japanese companies. This visit has realized 6 years after the last official visit of Japanese Foreign Minister to the Lao PDR. This visit deepened and strengthened the relationships between Japan and the Lao PDR, which currently serves as the ASEAN chair.

During his visit to the Lao PDR, Minister Kishida met with Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Saleumxay KOMMASITH on 4 May.

Minister Kishida proposed a "Japan Mekong Connectivity Initiative", which aims to further build up the infrastructure in the Mekong Region and facilitate the connectivity of the region through human resource development and improvement of the systems. Minister Kishida also proposed to compile Joint Development Plan with the Lao PDR to ensure medium to long-term development objectives of the Lao PDR. The initiative and the Plan were well-received. Both Ministers signed the Exchange of Notes for the Japanese Grant Aid for Reconstruction of the Bridges on National Road No.9 as well as for the Human resource Development Scholarship, for which the Government of Japan will extend grant aid. Minister Kishida expressed Japan's intention to continue to help the Lao PDR, and Minister Saleumxay thanked Japan for its assistance up to now. Minister Kishida mentioned that Japan also intends to promote development support by putting into practice the initiative for the "Partnership for Quality Infrastructure" and "Industrial Human Resources Development Cooperation Initiative."

Minister Kishida emphasized that the importance of strengthening the ASEAN Community, and the need to implement steadily the measures agreed to strengthen the East Asia Summit. He also emphasizes that the international community including the ASEAN should stand together to tackle the regional and international issues including missiles, nuclear tests and abduction by North Korea.

Minister Kishida also mentioned to H.E. Mr Saleumxay that the elephants at the Kyoto City Zoo presented from the Lao PDR are proving to be very popular among Japanese citizens. The number of visitors to the zoo has increased rapidly and more than one million citizens visited the zoo last year. The Cherry trees which were donated from Japan and planted last year in Houaphanh province are also reportedly growing steadily.

Minister Kishida also paid a courtesy call on Prime Minister Thongloun SISOULITH on 5 May. Minister Kishida emphasized Japan's intention to further engage in ODA assistance for the Lao PDR while making such assistance more effective by Japan-Mekong Connectivity Initiative. Prime Minister Thongloun thanked Japan for its assistance and expressed his wish that each Lao people will be able to benefit from the assistance. Prime Minister Thongloun also mentioned how he looked forward to the G7 Outreach Meeting in Ise-shima, Japan. He also expressed his determination to effectively manage the ASEAN meetings as the chair.

Minister Kishida was the first guest that Prime Minister Thongloun greeted at the Prime Minister's Office. Minister Kishida also visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and offered flowers on 5 May.

For inquiries, please contact the Press Center at the Lao Plaza Hotel (Tel: 021-218831) (until May 5th)

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