

Govt awards outgoing Japanese ambassador

Souksakhone Vaenkeo

The Lao government on Tuesday awarded the outgoing Japanese Ambassador to Laos Mr Masaaki Miyashita with the Friendship Medal in recognition of his contribution to socio-economic development in Laos and enhancing relations between the two nations.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Thongloun Sisoulith represented the Lao government in awarding the medal to the ambassador, who assumed office in 2007.

The award ceremony took place at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when the ambassador paid a farewell visit to Dr Thongloun on Tuesday, according to a press release from the ministry.

The deputy premier expressed his heartfelt congratulations and thanks to the ambassador for his attentive and active contributions to enhancing the friendship between the two nations during his mission.

His contribution has brought the friendly relations and cooperation between Laos and Japan to new heights, with leaders of both nations agreeing to lift the bilateral cooperation to one of a sustainable comprehensive cooperation partnership early this year.

"This was a historical milestone between Laos and Japan," the press release said.

Mr Miyashita thanked the Lao government and the Foreign Affairs Ministry for the support and assistance extended to him to allow him to fulfil his assigned role in Laos.

"During his three-year



Dr Thongloun Sisoulith (right) awards the Friendship Medal to Mr Masaaki Miyashita.

diplomatic mission in Laos, Mr Miyashita was attentive in promoting friendly relations and cooperation between Laos and Japan," said the head of the ministry's administrative office, Mr Vichith Sindavong.

Mr Miyashita was also active in encouraging and realising exchange visits by high-level leaders of both nations.

Lao President Choummaly Sayasone and a delegation paid an official visit to Japan in March this year when leaders of both sides agreed to lift their cooperation to a sustainable comprehensive cooperation partnership.

Japanese Crown Prince Akishino and Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Katsuya Okada visited Laos in March and July respectively.

Mr Miyashita encouraged the provision of Japanese Official Development Assistance to Laos and urged other donors to provide assistance and support to Laos through the roundtable meeting process.

Mr Vichith said this valuable assistance and support has contributed to poverty alleviation and socio-economic development in Laos, enabling the government to realise its plans.

Japan ranks as the biggest foreign donor to Laos, with assistance averaging US\$100 million per year.

The increase in numbers of Japanese volunteers and experts working in Laos to help develop the economy is another significant contribution by the outgoing ambassador, Mr Vichith said, adding that 44 Japanese experts and 64 volunteers are currently working in Laos.

Mr Miyashita also encouraged the Japanese government to contribute to the preparations for the 25th Sea Games hosted by Vientiane last December.

The Japanese government funded the construction of the Lao-Japan Budo Centre, worth more than 600 million Japanese yen, and helped to train Lao athletes for the games.

PM decree bans all forms of tobacco advertising

Xayxana Leukai

Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavanh has issued a decree to prohibit all forms of tobacco product promotion and advertising to reduce smoking in Laos and improve health nationwide.

The decree has been issued to support the Amended Law on the Government of Laos dated May 6, 2003, the Law on Hygiene, Disease Prevention and Health Promotion dated April 10, 2001 and the Law on Tobacco Control, approved on November 26, 2009 by the National Assembly.

The decree aims to raise awareness of the negative impact smoking has on human health and socio-economic development. It will prevent all forms of public tobacco advertising.

It stipulates that advertising and promotion should not encourage tobacco consumption through propaganda, which may entail the calculated use of specific words, images, sounds, performances, and even the use of famous people as models.

The decree bans the showing of any names, trademarks or details of

tobacco products in print media and on the Internet, radio and television.

In addition, tobacco products must not be advertised through the printing, painting, embroidering or carving of symbols on equipment and materials.

This includes advertising signs, umbrellas, hats, clothing, calendars, electric appliances and vehicles registered in Laos.

Tobacco products cannot be directly or indirectly advertised in Laos except at tobacco shops.

The decree also bans tobacco companies from gaining promotion through sponsoring or assisting sporting competitions, art and literature contests and educational activities.

To implement the decree, Mr Bouasone explained that the Ministry of Information and Culture will coordinate with relevant organisations to strictly manage and monitor all forms of tobacco product advertising.

The Prime Minister also advised the Ministry of Finance to manage and inspect the import of all kinds of media products and other equipment that may serve to

advertise tobacco products.

Mr Bouasone assigned the Ministry of Industry and Commerce to manage and monitor the manufacturing, import, export and distribution of tobacco products.

The Ministry of Health has been assigned to manage, monitor and assess the impact of smoking on the health of the public. This includes promoting the negative effects of smoking and encouraging smokers to give up their habit.

Individuals, companies and organisations who do not abide by this decree face punishment in the form of loss of business registration, fines, and seizure and confiscation of property.

The government's policy is to take care of the health of all Lao people by presenting relevant information through expanding the promotion of hygiene, disease prevention and health in both the state and private sectors. This includes improving the quality of, and access to, medical services for all people throughout the country.

The government has approved May 31 to be National No Tobacco Day every year.

Japan funds project to assist UXO victims in Xieng Khuang



Dr Souphan Inthirath (right) shakes hands with Mr Noriyasu Okayama after signing the MOU.

Bounfaeng Phaymanivong

Residents of various districts in Xieng Khuang province will benefit from a project to improve emergency medical aid, thanks to grant assistance provided by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Association for Aid and Relief (AAR Japan).

The three year project will run from September 2010 to September 2013, aiming to support unexploded ordnance (UXO) survivors in Xieng Khuang province by strengthening the level of emergency medical care for victims.

The project will also provide transportation to hospitals and health centres for victims of UXO accidents.

The Assistance for Survivors of Cluster Munitions and other Unexploded Ordnances in Xieng Khuang province project will cost US\$561,511 to implement in Paek, Phoukoud, Nonghaed, Kham, Khoun and Phaxay districts.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the project was signed yesterday between the Ministry of Health's National Rehabilitation Centre (NRC)

and AAR Japan.

The MOU was signed by Deputy Director of the NRC, Dr Souphan Inthirath, and AAR Japan Representative, Mr Noriyasu Okayama, and witnessed by officials from relevant sectors.

Dr Souphan said the Japanese government has funded several previous projects to assist people with disabilities and UXO survivors in cooperation with the NRC.

"This new project will enable survivors in various districts in Xieng Khuang province to receive proper treatment after UXO accidents."

He said survivors will firstly receive assistance from nearby village health volunteers and centres before they are taken to district hospitals for higher level treatment.

"I'd like to express my sincere thanks to the government of Japan and its people for providing financial support for this project. Also, I'd like to thank AAR Japan for its hard work in raising funds and preparations for this project," Dr Souphan said.

Mr Okayama said AAR Japan undertook a preliminary

study to prepare for the project last year. Many organisations gave valuable advice on exactly what kind of support is needed most for UXO victims.

"I'm quite sure that NRC and AAR Japan will face many challenges to successfully implement this project, but most of all, I think the greatest challenge will come in the form of sense of ownership," Mr Okayama said.

He said through his experience in Laos, he has seen many successful local community initiatives, such as local residents maintaining security in their neighbourhoods by forming a security team among themselves or people getting together to support a local temple.

"In the same way, through this project, I hope a sense of ownership will be created among the local people, so all villagers will be aware of what to do in the case of a UXO accident," he added.

AAR Japan is a non-government organisation working to provide emergency assistance, assistance to people with disabilities, and UXO clearance, amongst other activities.

Lao heart surgeons providing ...

normal cost of heart surgery was US\$3,500- 5,000 per case. However, the hospital also wants the patients who receive surgery to contribute at least two million kip to the future sustainability of the project. "But we won't charge this if the patient is poor," he

said.

ADS began to help Laos in 2002. The Lao Ministry of Health and the government of Luxembourg signed an agreement for two phases of cooperation; the first phase was from 2001 to 2008 and the second phase runs from

2009 to 2014.

From 2002, the ADS team performed surgeries at Setthathirath Hospital in Vientiane and since 2005 people with heart problems have been treated at Mahosot Hospital after the Heart Centre was established there.

Since 2001, doctors from Mahosot, Setthathirath and Mittaphab hospitals have worked with the ADS medical team, who provide practical and theoretical training in Laos and abroad.

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