

PRESS RELEASE

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Signing Ceremony for ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Partnership Cooperation Fund and East Asia Youth Exchange Fund between Japan and ASEAN

On March 23, 2007, the signing ceremony on the contribution amounting to USD 52 million for the ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership and the contribution amounting to approximately USD 196 million for the East Asia Youth Exchange from Japan to ASEAN was held in Tokyo at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan. H.E. Mr. Taro Aso, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, and H.E. Sithong Chitnhothinh, Ambassador-designate of Lao PDR to Japan, as the representative of all 10 ASEAN countries, signed the document which confirms the remittance and regulates the use of the contributions. Ambassadors and representatives from other ASEAN member countries were also present at the ceremony.

ASEAN countries set the year 2015 as the target for the realization of the ASEAN Community and are exerting its efforts for the internal integration. ASEAN has also become the "driver" of the East Asia cooperation and the flourished and unified ASEAN is beneficial not only for ASEAN but for the entire region. H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, considers that expanding youth exchanges with ASEAN and other East Asia countries, which should include high school, university and graduate school student exchanges, forms the basis of future vision of the region. He further considers that one of his goals is to construct firm solidarity among Asian countries and that the expansion of youth exchanges sets the foundation to it. With this as a background, H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe announced on January 15, 2007, that Japan would provide financial assistance amounting to approximately USD 315 million for the East Asia Youth Exchange. Out of this amount, approximately USD 196 million has been decided to be transferred to the account opened by the ASEAN Secretariat. Prime Minister Abe also announced at the 10th ASEAN-Japan Summit meeting held on January 14 that he would contribute USD 52 million to support the promotion of ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

These contributions are expected to implement various projects which would promote youth exchanges between Japan and East Asia countries including ASEAN, and strengthen economic partnership between Japan and ASEAN as well as promotion of ASEAN integration.

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