

DIPLOMACY

Thailand, Laos set sights on stronger partnership

MONGKOL BANGPRAPA

Thailand and Laos yesterday agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation in various areas, including fortifying border security, tackling haze issues, and adopting a mutual trade target of US\$11 billion by 2027.

Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra met with Lao Prime Minister Sonexay Siphandone at Government House, where the two leaders jointly observed the signing ceremony for four agreements.

The first agreement signed was a plan for implementing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on justice and legal affairs cooperation between Laos' Ministry of Justice and Thailand's Ministry of Justice.

The second agreement was a technical arrangement for rail passenger transportation between the State Railway of Thailand and the Lao National Railway State Enterprise.

The third agreement signed was a MoU on academic cooperation between Mae Fah Luang University in Thailand and Souphanouvong University in Laos.

The last agreement signed was a MoU between Thailand's Joint Standing Committee on Commerce, Industry and Banking and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce

and Industry.

The two sides also discussed and agreed upon heightening bilateral cooperation in three broad areas.

The first area covers border security cooperation, with both agreeing to increase anti-drug smuggling efforts, support more cash crop production in Laos to replace the growing of narcotic plants, and combatting call centre scam gangs in both countries. It also included increased information sharing to address cross-border haze pollution and expanding a tele-metering network to cover more tributaries of the Mekong in Laos for improved water management.

In the second area of cooperation, both countries agree to adopt a new trade value target set at US\$11 billion by 2027.

In the third area, Thailand agreed to provide Laos with more than 75 new scholarships, particularly in medicine and public health. Both sides also agreed to work closely under the Mekong Sub-region and Asean frameworks to tackle various challenges.

Both leaders also unveiled the emblem for the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Thailand and Lao. Its design incorporated some of the best-known architectural, religious and cultural symbols of both nations into a heart-shaped frame.



Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra and her Lao counterpart, Sonexay Siphandone, unveil the logo marking 75 years of Thailand-Laos relations at Government House. CHANAT KATANYU