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## World Bank envoy visits Laos

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THE World Bank's new Vice President for East Asia and the Pacific visited the Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, Dr Thongloun Sisoulith last Friday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Mr James W. Adams was appointed to the position in September last year, and arrived in Laos last Friday for a four-day official visit.

This is his first trip to Laos, during which he will discuss the Nam Theun 2 hydropower project with Dr Thongloun, and will review various poverty reduction projects.

Dr Thongloun thanked the World Bank for its extensive assistance to Laos, and in particular for supporting a sequence of roundtable meetings that welcomed 277 delegations from 36 countries to Vientiane in November, 2006, to discuss development issues with three international financial institutions, 22 NGOs and 15 UN agencies.

He said this roundtable meeting had raised awareness among many organisations and

investors of Laos, and increased their interest in cooperating with the Lao government to develop the economy.

At the meeting, the Lao government presented its socio-economic development plan, highlighting key reforms in the new five-year plan (2006-2010). The focus was on the development of trade, the encouragement of the private sector, revisions to budgetary legislation and ongoing governance reforms.

The Deputy PM said that at the conclusion of the meeting, all participants had agreed to cooperate with the Lao government in implementing the five-year plan.

Dr Thongloun explained that the Lao government receives US\$400-500 million in donor assistance each year. To keep track of all this funding, 22 development partners signed the Vientiane Declaration on Assistance, a procedural resolution to maximise the effectiveness of aid.

The Lao government is currently engaged in 16 cooperative projects with the World Bank, with an estimated



The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Dr Thongloun Sisoulith (*right*) thanks the World Bank's new Vice President for East Asia and the Pacific, Mr James W. Adams, for their contribution to Laos's bright future.

value of almost US\$243 million, he reported.

For 2006-2008, another 10 projects are planned, worth US\$81 million.

The World Bank is also drafting an anti-corruption

strategy for Laos based on the anti-corruption law already put in place by the Lao government.

Improvements to the cooperation strategy for the present through to 2010 are also

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# World Bank...

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planned, to ensure that all World Bank programmes are in sync with the five-year development plan.

The World Bank's VP plans to meet with many government officials during his visit, as well as members of donor agencies, and civil society and private sector representatives.

He will visit World Bank-financed projects in Xaythany district, in Vientiane,

Khammuan and Savannakhet provinces.

He will also visit the site of the Nam Theun 2 project, a poverty reduction project in Savannakhet, and will survey some of the activities undertaken to prevent Avian and Human Influenza in Vientiane.

According to a press release, the World Bank is also currently conducting a number

of analytic works aimed at supporting Lao PDR's National Socio-Economic Development Plan, as part of its country assistance strategy.

The World Bank's overall strategy focuses on sustaining growth, improving outcomes through better service delivery, strengthening capacity development and supporting the implementation of the Nam Theun 2 hydropower dam.