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## Japan funds project to boost transnational crime fighting in Laos

VIENTIANE, Laos -- INTERPOL, Japan and Laos have launched a new project enabling Lao police and border control officers to better tackle crime, including terrorism.

The iTwin Japan-Laos initiative is funded by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs to connect INTERPOL's I-24/7 global police communications system and criminal databases to seven Lao border points.

Officially launched by Japan's Ambassador to Laos, Takeshi Hikiyama, in the presence of Laos' Vice Minister of Public Security, Major General, Dr. Somvang Thammasith, and INTERPOL's Director of Global Outreach and Regional Support (GORS), Roraima Andriani, the ceremony on 8 November in Vientiane involved 18 VIP guests representing INTERPOL, Japan and Laos.

A series of working meetings took place the subsequent day to determine the 2019 programme of activities which will involve :

- site surveys at seven border points;
- training on the use of INTERPOL's integrated policing capabilities;
- testing standard operating procedures through border screening operations.

"With the threat of terrorism in the Middle East and Africa spreading to Asia, the Lao government is working hard to improve its connectivity with neighboring countries, to shift from a landlocked to a land-linked country," said Ambassador Takeshi Hikiyama.

"When it comes to terrorists or transnational organized crime networks operating across borders, it is imperative that the right information is in the hands of the right officer at the right time," added INTERPOL's GORS Director, Roraima Andriani.

The iTwin Japan-Laos project builds on the success of the EU ASEAN Migration and Border Management Programme II and also on the Twinning initiative, which partners National Central Bureaus (NCBs) to facilitate the development of collaborative and mutually beneficial exchanges.

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