

News conference by Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister of Laos Thongloun Sisoulith following Russia-Laos talks

Excerpts from the transcript:

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Dmitry Medvedev: The talks were very useful, constructive and covered all aspects of our current cooperation, including trade, energy, science, education, tourism, and other areas. Several documents were signed to strengthen the legal framework of our bilateral cooperation.

Laos is an important partner to Russia in Southeast Asia. Our relations are based on long-term traditions of friendship, trust and support. We are both interested in developing relations at the political level, as well as in the trade and economic sphere.

Our bilateral trade remains rather modest. Therefore, we discussed possible measures to expand our trade links, increase trade, and ensure more active cooperation between our business communities. We also talked about ways to extend the list of supplied goods and launch those mutually beneficial projects that already exist but have been subject to negotiations for too long.

There are truly big projects such as the very promising Sekong 5 hydropower station. We expect all the agreements regarding its construction to be finished soon so that we could start on design work. There are other important areas of cooperation, including nuclear energy, which is the subject of one of the agreements signed today.

Education is another important area. Thousands of Lao students and professionals have studied in Russian and Soviet universities. Many of them now hold government positions.

Year after year, the number of Russian tourists in Laos grows. The visa-free travel agreement between our countries is about to come into effect.

Laos successfully coordinates the dialogue partnership between Russia and ASEAN. We see great potential in this cooperation as ASEAN is one of the major trade and economic associations in the Asia Pacific, with significant experience in trade talks. Russia, both as an individual country and a member of the Eurasian Economic Union, plans to continue working on simplifying trade procedures and launching new projects.

Thongloun Sisoulith: The final outcome of our talks is the signing of a large

number of documents today, particularly, seven cooperation agreements. This is a testament to the progress made in our bilateral ties in the spirit of the traditions that characterise our relations. We are committed to the comprehensive development of these relations.

We would be very glad to see you, Mr Medvedev, on an official visit to Laos at any time convenient to you.