

MEDIA RELEASE

AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY
VIENTIANE



21 August 2014

Australia-ASEAN crew in boat racing festival

As a local initiative in the Lao PDR to help commemorate the 40th anniversary of ASEAN-Australia relations, the Australian Embassy in Vientiane is assembling a multi-country crew to compete in the annual boat racing festival on 9 October.

Representatives from the Australian and ASEAN Embassies in Vientiane, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' ASEAN Directorate and the Mekong River Commission (MRC) will race under the tutelage of experienced Sikhaytha village oarsmen.

The crew from a range of nations gathered at the MRC waterfront on 21 August to formally begin their regular training sessions on the Mekong River.

The crew will build their racing skills on heavier training boats before transitioning to Sikhaytha village's *Hong Mea Ya 1* racing boat in the final weeks before the festival.

Australian Ambassador John Williams said participating in the annual boat racing festival was a highly appropriate and fun way to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Australia-ASEAN ties in the Lao PDR.

“The annual boat race festival is a great celebration of the Lao people’s connection with the Mekong River, and of their competitive spirit,” said Williams.

“We greatly appreciate that the people of Sikhaytha are giving us an opportunity to be a part of this iconic Lao festival, along with our partners from the MRC.”

“The *Hong Mea Ya 1* may not be the fastest boat on the Mekong, but we have a determined crew, eager to learn and looking forward to what will be a unique opportunity for us all.”

Australia is organising a range of events, in each of the 10 ASEAN countries and in Australia, to mark 40 years of Australia’s status as a formal dialogue partner with ASEAN.

The 40th anniversary will culminate in an ASEAN-Australia leaders' Commemorative Summit following the East Asia Summit in Myanmar in November.



Ambassador John Williams (centre right) together with Mr Souraxay Phoumavong, Director of Environment Division of Mekong River Commission welcomed Australia-ASEAN boat crews at the MRC waterfront.

Media Enquiries: Minggakhom Pangnasak, Senior Media and Communications Officer, Australian Embassy, Phone: (021) 353 800 ext. 125