More Lao nationals head for studies in Cuba

The Cuban government has provided scholarships for five more Lao nationals to study at the Latin American School of Medicine in Cuba. A ceremony to bid farewell to the scholarship awardees took place in Vientiane on Monday evening and was attended by the Cuban Ambassador to Laos, Mr Pablo Antonio.

This academic year 2017-2018, they will study at the Latin American School of Medicine, Elam, in Havana, an institution of international prestige.

The group leaves Laos for Cuba today. They will first study Spanish for a year and then begin a six-year medical degree.

Cuba has granted several hundred scholarships to Lao nationals over the years and about 140 people have graduated from Cuban universities. They took degrees in medicine, economics, law, specialty, high language, philology, architecture, engineering and veterinary science.

In 1998, the then Cuban president, Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, established the Latin American School of Medicine to provide free education for young people from the so-called "third world" countries, as well as for young and impoverished people from developed countries including the United States.

Since then, more than 25,000 doctors have graduated from Elam, coming from 117 nations where more than 100 ethnic groups are represented. It is a significant achievement which lies the strength of this project, according to a press release from the Cuban Embassy.

Mr Yayouakha Houaouayxay, 24, one of the group heading for Cuba today, said: "I am very happy and excited to be studying medicine in Cuba. When I've finished my studies I will have gained new skills to help develop Laos and I will be able to help treat Lao people. I would like to thank the Cuban government for giving me this great opportunity."