



Comité de Coopération avec le Laos

Boîte postale 4791, Vientiane, Laos

Tél : (856-21) 25 40 39 - Télécopie : (856-21) 21 69 25

Email : cclvientiane@ccl-laos.org

Site : www.ccl-laos.org

Revue de presse du 18 au 22 Mai 2015

Vous trouverez ci-joint un choix d'articles publiés au Laos en anglais dans le quotidien "Vientiane Times" et en français dans l'hebdomadaire le "Rénovateur".

Bonne réception et bonne lecture,
Cordialement,
Bureau du CCL à Vientiane

➤ **Vientiane Times :**

- [4,000 more nurses needed: ministry](#)
- [Lao economic growth projected to slow](#)
- [Thailand funds drug treatment centre in Laos](#)
- [Vientiane residents call for smoke-free Chao Anouvong Park](#)
- [Growth cuts absolute poverty but inequality increases](#)
- [China to establish modern agriculture development zone in Savannakhet](#)
- [China's financial assistance hits 3,077 billion kip, cooperation grows](#)
- [New maternity hospital to open next month](#)
- [Experts assess project to narrow the development gap](#)
- [Health workers prepare for survey on child immunization](#)
- [Govt steps up protection of conservation forest](#)
- [Laos takes steps to mitigate effects of natural disasters](#)
- [Standards for Lao products to be upgraded for export](#)

4,000 more nurses needed: ministry

(By Xayxana Leukai)

Some 4,000 more nurses are needed to care for patients at hospitals and healthcare centres nationwide, according to the Ministry of Health. Statistics from the ministry's Organisation and Personnel Department show that almost 15,000 medical staff are employed throughout the country, of whom about 6,000 are nurses. But the current number of nurses falls far short of that needed, and the ministry says about 10,000 nurses in total are required to adequately staff health facilities nationwide. Last year, the ministry set a quota of 700 people as new recruits into the government health service, including nurses, which is only a fraction of the staff required. Deputy Minister of Health, Associate Prof. Dr Som Ock Kingsada, said last week there were several reasons for the shortage of nurses. To begin with, the University of Health Sciences (UHS) has inadequate facilities for teaching and learning. There are not enough teachers in the field of nursing and a lack of space for students to do practical work. Many nurses have retired while others are reluctant to take up work in rural areas and often leave their jobs when they are assigned to the provinces. Associate Prof. Dr Som Ock said that if the ministry could train the number of nurses it actually needs, patients, and especially those in rural

areas, would benefit. "Patients would receive much better care," he said. He also said it was essential to train nurses in specialised areas, such as surgery, work in intensive care units, and other fields. Nurses working in different sections of the hospital should have different duties and working methods. "Training in ethics is also important for nurses along with general nursing skills," he added. Head of the Organisation Division of the Organisation and Personnel Department, Dr Khampasong Theppanya, said Lao hospitals followed the principle that two members of staff should be employed for each patient. For example, Mahosot Hospital has 450 beds so 900 staff must be employed to provide adequate care. Dean of the Faculty of Nursing Sciences at UHS, Dr Chanheme Songnavong, said that every country has a shortage of nurses, so Laos was not alone. Every year, about 170 nurses graduate with a bachelor degree or diploma from UHS. "We enroll a certain number of students according to the quota specified by the Ministry of Health," Dr Chanheme said. Among the problems faced by UHS is a lack of vehicles to transport student nurses to various facilities for practical training in local communities. The university also suffers from a general shortage of space.

(Vientiane Times 18 May 2015)

Lao economic growth projected to slow

(By Times Reporters)

Lao economic growth in 2014/15 is projected to slow slightly to 7.6 percent because the financial and banking service sector tightened up on the loans they issued in 2014 while the government will continue to curb expenditure in the public sector. However, the Lao economy is expected to grow by 7.8 percent in fiscal year 2015/16 as there are some hydropower plants and dams near completion that are expected to start production for domestic consumption and export, while the financial and banking sector is expected to release more loans. The figures were reported on Friday at the 'Lao Economy in 2014 and Outlook for 2015' meeting, organised by the National Economic Research Institute (NERI) of Laos with support from the World Bank. The meeting was co-chaired by Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Dr Bounthavy Sisouphanthong and Director General of NERI Dr Leebouapao. The objective of the meeting was to disseminate the results of research on Lao macroeconomic conditions in 2012 and 2013, which was undertaken by NERI under the Ministry of Planning and Investment in collaboration with other departments. The report has three main parts. **Part 1:** World Economic Performance in 2014 with factors to influence global and domestic economies in which highlights of political, economic and natural disaster solutions at regional and international levels will be discussed. **Part 2:** Lao Macroeconomic Performance, in

which growth and macro-economic stability will be discussed. **Part 3:** Economic Outlook for 2015 and the next few years, in which global economic trends and projections of domestic economic trends for the coming years will be discussed. The Lao economic report for 2014 concluded that the economy has continued to expand and stabilise. In fiscal year 2013/14 the Lao economy grew by 7.8 percent which was the second highest growth rate among Asean countries, but was slower compared to 2012/13. GDP per capita reached 13.41 million kip (about US\$1,671). The service sector grew by 9.3 percent, making up 39.3 percent of GDP; the industrial sector grew by 8.5 percent, accounting for 27.5 percent of GDP; while the agricultural sector grew by 3 percent, accounting for 24.8 percent of GDP. According to the report, economic stability in 2014 progressed compared to the previous year. The consumer price index grew at a slower pace due to there being little pressure from imported goods such as oil, and there was good traffic management. The government was able to manage the exchange rate and incomes, adjust expenditure and reduce the budget deficit compared to last year. However, the government was unable to implement income and expenditure plans according to the adjustment plan, while the inflation rate in the food and beverage groups remained high.

(Vientiane Times 18 May 2015)

Thailand funds drug treatment centre in Laos

(By Khonesavanh Latsaphao)

The Thai government yesterday provided grant assistance worth some 50 million baht (almost 12 billion kip) to fund the construction of a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre at Phonhong district hospital in Vientiane province. The Thai funding will also be used to improve the outpatient building at the hospital and buy medical equipment to treat road accident victims. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Thongloun Sisoulith and Deputy Prime Minister of Thailand and Minister of Foreign Affairs, General Tanasak Patimapragorn joined the ground-breaking ceremony along with ministers and other officials from the two countries. Thai Deputy Prime Minister General Tanasak and his delegation also visited the Vientiane province technical school. General Tanasak said at the ground-breaking ceremony that the Thai government has provided a grant of 50 million baht (almost 12 billion kip) to build six buildings for health services in Vientiane province. The project to build a drug treatment and rehabilitation centre is part of the Lao government's plan for the development of the health sector, as it needs to provide health services for the victims of drug addiction in Vientiane province and surrounding areas. The Lao government is strongly committed to fighting drugs and

crime as well as addressing the long-term harmful impacts of drugs on society, national security, stability and socio-economic development. In addition, children and young people must be educated on the dangers of illicit drugs. To treat drug users, the government previously built the Somsanga Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre in Vientiane. The government is also upgrading the existing nine treatment centres in the provinces of Bokeo, Oudomxay, Huaphan, Luang Prabang, Xayaboury, Savannakhet and Champassak. Last year, senior government officials, United Nations representatives and personnel from international organisations burned drugs at That Luang esplanade to mark the 27th International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. The confiscated drugs were estimated to be worth around US\$17.5 million (about 135 billion kip). In 2013, the drugs that were burnt to mark the same day were valued at more than US\$18 million (almost 140 billion kip). The illicit drugs incinerated in 2013 included 5.2 million amp hetamine tablets, 2,212kg of dried cannabis, 307 kg of crystal methamphetamine, 18kg of compressed heroin, 1.4kg of heroin powder, and 3.2kg of a substance resembling heroin.

(Vientiane Times 19 May 2015)

Vientiane residents call for smoke-free Chao Anouvong Park

(By Times Reporters)

Vientiane residents and young people on Friday assembled in Chao Anouvong Park to campaign for the smoke-free status of the capital's largest public park to be upheld. The gathering aimed to remind the public that the park was declared a smoke-free zone in 2011 under the Law on Tobacco Control. People taking part in the event said they wanted to appeal to smokers not to light up inside the park. They pointed out that the park was a smoke-free area and should be kept that way for the enjoyment of tourists, vendors, young people and all residents of Vientiane, so they could go there for healthy recreational activities knowing that the law would be complied with. The campaign was part of events taking place in the run up to World No Tobacco Day on May 31. Vientiane Vice Mayor Mr Saythong Keodouangdy, who was also present, said that Chao Anouvong Park's smoke-free status was in keeping with the capital's six slogans to encourage the environmentally-friendly development of Vientiane, especially cleanliness. "It also supports projects to make Vientiane a healthy place to live, especially our work in the area of tobacco control. We have already created no-smoking areas in government offices and at tourist sites," he said. Mr Saythong reminded those present that smoking and inhaling other people's cigarette smoke was a health hazard and the cause of chronic diseases. According to a global re-

port from the World Health Organisation (WHO), 4,807 Lao people die from tobacco-related diseases each year, the equivalent of 13 people a day. "Keeping Chao Anouvong Park smoke-free will result in a healthy, enjoyable, relaxing and attractive place for all," he said. WHO Representative to Laos Dr Juliet Fleischl said tobacco use was the biggest contributor to non-communicable diseases such as heart attack, stroke, cancer and emphysema, all of which account for 63 percent of deaths worldwide. More than 50 percent of young people aged 13-15 are exposed to second-hand smoke at home and 64 percent are exposed to secondhand smoke in public places. "I am sure there are many more deaths that are indirectly related to tobacco use and secondhand smoke that are not counted in this global report," Dr Fleischl said. It is estimated that by 2030 tobacco will kill more than 8 million people worldwide if action is not taken now. This is why World No Tobacco Day is an important time to remind people around the world that action has to be taken now before it is too late. The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is the only treaty that responds to the global tobacco epidemic. As of February 12 this year, 168 countries had signed up to this convention with many expressing their wish to become a party to the convention.

(Vientiane Times 19 May 2015)

Growth cuts absolute poverty but inequality increases

(By Times Reporters)

Market-driven reforms have helped to spur strong growth, cut absolute poverty, and enhance social conditions in Laos in recent decades, but they've also been accompanied by a rise in inequality, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The ADB study entitled 'Two Decades of Rising Inequality and Declining Poverty in the Lao PDR' was launched at a ceremony yesterday in Vientiane. Several economists have expressed concern over the rising inequality in Laos as it could undermine the sustainability of future growth. "The increase in inequality is of considerable policy concern as it could threaten social cohesion, as well as the sustainability of future growth," ADB Country Director for Laos, Ms Sandra Nicoll told the ceremony. She added that the increase of inequality may also limit the capacity to make further inroads into poverty alleviation. The study authored by ADB Lead Economist Jayant Menon and Australian National University Professor Peter Warr, examines how inequality has evolved in the country over the past two decades. The study computes and compares measures of consumption inequality using household data surveys over a 20-year period including, for the first time, the most recent data from the Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey for 2012- 2013. The study finds that inequality has increased, at both the national level and within rural and urban areas, Mr Menon

told the launching ceremony. "The estimated Gini co-efficient of expenditure inequality has risen from 0.311 in 1992-1993 to 0.364 in 2012—2013, a statistically significant increase," he said. At the same time, the estimated incidence of absolute poverty has halved, from 46 percent to 23 percent. Coupled with the Gini co-efficient finding, this indicates that while the poor are now better off in real terms, the rich have benefited even more, in both proportionate and absolute terms. The report notes that if the real expenditure of all household groups had increased at the same rate over the study period, poverty incidence would have declined from 46 percent to 17 percent - demonstrating that rising inequality undermined the extent of potential poverty reduction by 6 percent. Ms Nicoll noted that for the fruits of growth to reach all citizens, economic opportunities must be expanded and access to them equalised. "Inclusiveness must be an integral part of growth and policy development to reduce the inequality gap and to cut poverty further," she said. Based in Manila, the ADB is owned by 67 members, including 48 from the region. Its main instruments for helping its developing member countries are policy dialogue, loans, equity investments, guarantees, grants, and technical assistance. In 2014, ADB assistance totalled US\$22.9 billion, including co-financing of US\$9.2 billion.

(Vientiane Times 20 May 2015)

China to establish modern agriculture development zone in Savannakhet

(By Times Reporters)

Lao and China have agreed on establishing a modern agriculture development zone in Savannakhet province to produce quality rice products for export to the Chinese market. The memorandum of understanding (MoU) on establishing the modern agriculture development zone was signed yesterday in Vientiane between the Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Agriculture Department, Savannakhet provincial Agriculture and Forestry Department, and Xuanye (Lao) Sole Co., Ltd. The event was witnessed by Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Associate Prof. Dr Khamphad Sourinphoumy and Hunan province's Commerce Department Director General Mr Xu Xiangping. Delegations from the two parties were satisfied with bilateral cooperation in recent years between the ministry and Hunan province, particularly the rice production project between the provincial Agriculture and Forestry Department and Xuanye (Lao) Sole Co., Ltd. Xuanye is a subsidiary of Hunan Xuanye Ecological Agriculture Development Co., Ltd, and has 2,000 hectares as an agriculture production base, in a 3+2 model (financial, technical, marketing + labour, land) in Champhone district of Savannakhet province. As a result, the Chinese government agreed to provide a quota of 8,000 tonnes of rice for the company in 2015-2016. The company is now preparing to supply rice seeds and fertiliser for farmers in the project area to ensure rice production meets the quantity required during the upcoming wet season. To guarantee production and comply with quality export standards for the Chinese market, China expressed the desire to establish a modern agriculture development zone in Savannakhet province.

The zone will include the examination of new rice seed varieties, demonstrations of planting techniques and the use of agricultural machinery, grain drying and selection, processing, packaging, warehousing, goods transit along with services for export. The governments of Laos and China agreed that the establishment of a modern agriculture development zone in the province would help develop industrial rice production as part of a quality exports value chain. According to the MoU, the tripartite agreed on principles for establishing a modern agricultural development zone, with the integration of processing, maintenance, distribution of agriculture products, agricultural machinery servicing and trading, and an exchange centre of quality agricultural products to service exports to China. Technical teams from Laos and China will together identify potential areas then draft an economic feasibility study and submit it to the governments of the two countries for consideration. The Lao Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Agriculture Department will be responsible for coordinating and providing convenience for the relevant sectors in submitting documents for approval. Savannakhet provincial Agriculture and Forestry Department will together implement the project with Xuanye (Lao) Sole Co., Ltd and be responsible for coordinating with local authorities in the project area and providing convenience to Xuanye. In addition, the provincial department is responsible for following up the project and reporting the progress to government. Meanwhile, Xuanye is responsible for surveys and the economic feasibility study, designing basic infrastructure and seeking funds to support the project.

(Vientiane Times 20May 2015)

China's financial assistance hits 3,077 billion kip, cooperation grows

(By Times Reporters)

China's financial assistance to Laos has climbed to more than 3,077 billion kip (2.35 billion yuan), which has been used to finance various development projects, according to an official report. Of the total assistance, more than 1,047 billion kip (800 million yuan) has been given in the form of grants, more than 523 billion kip (400 million yuan) has been provided as interest-free loans, and more than 1,505 billion kip has been provided as low-interest loans. Over the past year, relations and cooperation between Laos and China have further been enhanced and expanded, according to the report presented by the Laos-China Cooperation Commission at a recent meeting between the government cabinet, Vientiane Mayor and provincial governors. Trade between the two countries reached more than 29,325 billion kip (US\$3.61 billion) in 2014, an increase of 31.89 percent compared to the year before. Lao exports to China were valued at more than 14,378 billion kip (US\$1.77 billion), an increase of 73.56 percent compared to 2013. The value of Lao imports from China reached more than 14,947 billion kip (US\$1.84 billion), an in-

crease of 7.15 percent on the year before. Investments by Chinese companies hit more than US\$5.2 billion, making China the top foreign investor in Laos, according to statistics provided by the Lao Ministry of Planning and Investment. The Chinese have invested in a wide range of areas including agriculture, banking, hydropower, mining, and services. Recently, Laos and Yunnan – China's flagship province for cooperation with Laos - agreed to step up cooperation in the fields of tourism, trade, economics, transport, agriculture and hydropower. They reached the agreement at a recent meeting in Vientiane when both sides reviewed cooperation over recent years, especially between Yunnan and the northern provinces of Laos where Chinese companies are investing heavily. The two sides agreed to establish the Boten-Mohan Economic Cooperation Zone border crossing between Luang Namtha and Yunnan provinces. They also discussed ways to enable more farm products grown in Laos to be sold on the Chinese market in a bid to improve livelihoods in northern Laos.

(Vientiane Times 21 May 2015)

New maternity hospital to open next month

(By Xayxana Leukai)

The new Mother and Newborn Hospital, located in Nongphaya village, Xaythany district, will open next month, helping to ease the load on the existing hospital in Kaoyot village, Sisattanak district. Director General of the hospital, Associate Prof. Dr Bouavanh Saensathit, told *Vientiane Times* last week that construction of the new hospital is now complete. “We expect that the new facility will take in mothers-to-be who are seeking good treatment,” he said. Currently, on a daily basis, at least 300 people, including children, go for treatment at the existing hospital. Of this number about 20 mothers actually give birth at the hospital. The new hospital contains 250 beds. The two-storey facility will be worth about 15 billion kip and consists of three separate buildings. Building A will contain an outpatient ward, para-clinic, intensive care unit, surgical theatre and a birthing ward. Buildings B and C will house overnight patients and the gynaecology and obstetrics department. Japan's Honda Foundation donated

US\$500,000 towards the construction of Building C. The rest of the project was funded by the Lao government. The Swiss-Laos Hospital Project also provided medical equipment and funds for improving facilities at the building. The existing 150-bed Mother and Child Health Hospital is inadequate to serve the local population and lacks sufficient beds to provide quality care. Dr Bouavanh said the new hospital is part of the government's plan to cut the mortality rate of mothers and children in Laos. According to the Lao Social Indicator Survey in 2012, the death rate of birthing mothers is 357 out of every 100,000 births. The death rate of children under one year is 68 out of every 1,000 live births, and for children under five it is 79 out of every 1,000 live births. The new hospital will employ 350 doctors and nurses and has so far recruited 200 medical staff, many of whom have undergone training in Vietnam, France, Switzerland and Thailand.

(Vientiane Times 21 May 2015)

Experts assess project to narrow the development gap

(By Times Reporters)

Senior officials from line ministries and JICA experts met in Vientiane yesterday to report on the outcome of the final evaluation of the Lao Pilot Programme for Narrowing the Development Gap towards Asean Integration, which ran from 2011-2015. The project was a unique initiative set up by the Lao government, Asean Secretariat and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). It established a tripartite cooperation mechanism for narrowing the development gap towards Asean integration in line with the Asean Community Road Map. Three pilot components, in the fields of tourism, the environment, and agriculture, have been operating under this tripartite cooperation umbrella. This information was supplied at

the 5th Steering Committee Meeting held to evaluate the project. During the meeting, participants heard about the output of each pilot project, especially in the tourism sector, which involved collaboration between the public and private sectors, tourism marketing and promotion activities for tourism products derived from appropriate sources, and the sustainable use of tourism resources, which were conducted successfully, including the Visit Laos 2015 project. In pilot provinces, through collaboration between the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism and provincial departments of the ministry, tourism development through the appropriate use of resources that benefits local residents is being promoted. Tourism pro-

motion activities through collaboration between the ministry and its provincial departments are also being expanded to other areas and provinces. In the environment sector, participants learnt about the guidelines for environmentally sustainable cities, which have been formulated and disseminated based on national environment strategies and action plans. Urban environmental management (solid waste management) in the three towns of Vientiane and the provincial capitals of Luang Prabang and Xayaboury has been improved based on the guidelines for environmentally sustainable cities. Community-based urban environmental management

for solid waste management has been promoted in the three pilot towns, according to JICA. In agriculture, meeting participants learnt about the roadmap for the introduction of Asean Good Agricultural Practice which was introduced at pilot sites, and were told that the capacities of relevant officials in the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and other stakeholders had been strengthened. The meeting was attended by the Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment, Dr Bounthavy Sisouphanthong, Chief Representative of the JICA Laos Office, Mr Yusuke Murakami, and other invited guests.

(Vientiane Times 21 May 2015)

Health workers prepare for survey on child immunization

(By Times Reporters)

Laos will conduct the first survey of vaccination and body measurements of target children as part of efforts to fulfill Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 1 and 4 on nutrition and child health. The survey will also help health officials to achieve vaccination targets in the years to come. Deputy Director General of the Hygiene and Health Promotion Department of the Ministry of Health, Dr Phath Keungsaneth, said the Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI) ran a survey back in 1980 but did not include any information on vaccination drives. "Most of the information and data obtained at that time was gathered with other sectors," Dr Phath said when speaking at a vaccination survey training course held in Vientiane province this week. Even though vaccination drives have succeeded in ensuring that 20 percent more children are immunised than five years ago, the immunisation rate in Laos is low compared to other developing countries. Dr Phath said the upcoming survey would gather clear data, evidence, and information on the extent of vaccination cov-

erage so the health sector could better assess, monitor, plan and make decisions concerning future vaccination programmes. The training course will involve more than 160 participants from 17 provinces, who will learn about survey methods before starting their work. Dr Phath did not know when the survey would begin but said it should start as soon as possible. It would include information on the EPI's vaccination programme against Japanese encephalitis in children aged 1-14, which was completed earlier this month. In addition, it would be a good opportunity to assess the relationship between immunisation and nutrition. "I believe this training course will help survey staff to understand the tools involved and the survey process before they go into the field to collect data," he said. Deputy Director General of the National Institute of Public Health, Dr Souraxay Phommala, Manager of the Expanded Programme of Immunisation, Dr Anonh Xeuvatvongsa, and Dr Siddhatha on behalf of the World Health Organisation in Laos also attended the training course.

(Vientiane Times 21 May 2015)

Govt steps up protection of conservation forest

(By Times Reporters)

Development projects carried out in conservation forest areas in which the forest area has been converted or changed to another use must compensate for the forest loss, a new decree states. The government recently issued the Decree on Conservation Forest that identifies principles, measures and regulations on the establishment, allocation, management, protection, development and use of conservation forests. The decree offers a policy which will allow for the conversion or change of use of a conservation forest or part of a conservation forest in necessary cases which will bring greater benefits for the country. However, converting the use of conservation forests needs approval from the authorities concerned. For example, converting national or provincial conservation forest or part of a forest for another purpose must be first approved by the Standing Committee of the National Assembly in response to the request made by the government. According to the decree, developers of hydropower, mining, road construction, electricity grid networks and other projects whose activities have converted conservation forest for other purposes are legally obliged to contribute funds for reforestation to compensate for the forest areas lost to their projects. The developers are required to contribute US\$800 per hectare, according to the 17-page decree. Hydropower projects must also contribute additional funds of US\$2 per hectare per year to finance activities for the management and protection of conservation forest in the water catchment areas. Tourism business operators whose ecotourism activities engage in making use of conservation forest or surrounding areas are also required to pay obligation fees coupled with the contribution of an additional one percent of their

total revenue per year towards forest conservation activities. Filmmakers and other businesses making use of conservation forest for commercial interest must also contribute one percent of the total investment of their project. Under the decree, areas of conservation forest can be expanded if the forest areas near existing conservation forests are surveyed and proven to meet certain criteria. Conservation forest in Laos is categorised into four levels – national conservation forest, provincial conservation forest, district conservation forest and village conservation forest. No party is allowed to encroach or undertake activities that harm the conservation forests illegally, especially in the extremely-critical conservation zones, which are the habitat and breeding zones for wildlife and contain a density of plant species and biodiversity. The decree demands the relevant authorities to install signs that identify conservation forest areas so that the areas are visible thus people will be aware about the zones they are not allowed to encroach upon. The relevant authorities are also required to carry out regular and on-request inspections, especially in areas where the conservation forests are potentially at risk of being encroached including at the entry points to the forests. The decree stipulates that the concerned authorities should establish stations in potential areas to monitor encroachment and prevent forest fire, while drawing up a plan for forest recovery.

Local people are permitted to make a living including collecting non-timber forest products in the conservation forests in line with the relevant regulations and allocation plan, but not in the extremely-critical conservation zones.

(Vientiane Times 22 May 2015)

Laos takes steps to mitigate effects of natural disasters

(By Souknilundon Southivongnorath)

Laos is taking steps to lessen the effects of extreme weather events by mainstreaming disaster and climate change risk management into investment decisions through an ongoing project funded by development partners. A meeting to discuss the project took place in Vientiane yesterday, organised by the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Participants included officials from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, the Japanese Embassy to Laos, Japan International Cooperation Agency, and the World Bank. Speaking at the meeting, Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Dr Khamlien Pholsena said Laos had suffered several natural disasters since 2008 which had slowed the country's social and economic development. But the sustained management of disaster and climate change risks could be a major defence against future weather extremes. "This project aims to strengthen infrastructure and the capacity of central and provincial sectors to reduce the risk of natural disasters and mitigate the impact of climate change on the economy," Dr Khamlien said. The intended project outcomes are for Laos to identify specific areas at risk of nat-

ural disasters and create standard designs for the construction of roads and bridges that would withstand harsh weather, as well as consider crowded communities that would be at risk. Meeting participants were briefed on Tropical Storm Kamuri which pounded Laos in 2008. Heavy rain caused a sudden rise in the level of the Mekong, damaging the homes of over 200,000 people living along the riverbank in 11 provinces. A year later, Tropical Storm Ketsana killed 28 people and affected 30,000 families in five provinces in the south of Laos. In 2011, tropical storms Haima and Nock-Ten swept across the country, resulting in 30 deaths and affecting over 500,000 people in 12 provinces. Dr Khamlien said the events of 2011 had far-reaching impacts, with the damage bill estimated at over US\$175 million. He said the meeting was fundamental to decisions about the construction of infrastructure in areas at risk, which should be strongly built as a defence against future extremes of weather. Laos is receiving international support to plan and implement the project. The government of Japan has provided US\$2.7 million under the Japan Policy and Human Resources Development initiative. The World Bank in Laos is managing the budget.

(Vientiane Times 22 May 2015)

Standards for Lao products to be upgraded for export

(By Times Reporters)

The Ministry of Science and Technology is drafting a strategy related to national standards for Lao products, aiming to further boost commercial productivity and production for export. The long-term strategy will serve as a guideline for the promotion and development of product standards in Laos so that more Lao products can be competitive with the introduction of regional integration. At a meeting held in Vientiane last week, officials from the relevant sectors and busi-

nesspeople gave inputs to the strategy before submitting it to the government for consideration and approval. The meeting also opened an opportunity for both the public and private sectors to discuss how to develop Lao products to a higher standard which will be accepted regionally and internationally. Acting Director General of the Department of Standards and Metrology Mr Bounpone Buapheng told *Vientiane Times* yesterday that the strategy identified work plans and

activities for the management and promotion of the standards of Lao people. “The national standard certified by the Ministry of Science and Technology is critical for Lao products to export and create confidence for consumers,” he said. Currently 44 Lao products have been certified to national standards including those related to construction materials, food items and other agriculture products. Mr Bounpone said his department would focus on encouraging products in potential sectors to receive national standards including agriculture and industrial products as well as tourism related products. He said the national standards of Laos are in harmony with regional and international requirements which should enhance the reputation of Lao products to be accepted by external markets. The Lao economy is still considered a high growth economy compared to other countries in the region, projected to grow at 7.5 percent this year. The remarkable growth was mainly driven by the

inflow of foreign direct investment to a number of sectors including agriculture, industry and services. Many more new Lao products have arisen and been upgraded in the terms of quality, especially those for export, since the government has a policy to promote commercial production. As Laos became a member of the World Trade Organisation in February 2013 and will become part of the Asean Economic Community at the end of this year, the task related to the standards of Lao products are even more significant when it comes to enhancing product profiles. Mr Bounpone said one of the main challenges for Laos at the moment was that some entrepreneurs still don't understand the significance of the standards certified for their products and how they contribute to sales and production growth. He said his department will continue to improve the quality of export products while focusing more on human resource development in the sector.

(Vientiane Times 22 May 2015)