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10th Congress elects new Party leadership

(By SouksakhoneVaenkeo)



MrBounnhangVorachit (right) shakes hands with MrChoummalySayasone before presenting flowers to thank the President for his significant contribution to national liberation, development and protection.

The 10th Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party ended yesterday after electing a new Party Central Committee, new Secretary General of the 10th Party Central Committee, and Politburo members. The 69-member Party Central Committee was elected on Thursday by 685 Party members, who represented 252,879 Party members across the country in attending the five-day national congress that took place at the National Convention Centre. In its first meeting which convened yesterday, the new Party Central Committee elected MrBounnhangVorachit as Secretary General of the 10th Party Central Committee, replacing MrChoummalySayasone who had assumed office as the Party Chief for two terms. The 10th Party Central Committee elected 11 Politburo members, namely: MrBounnhangVorachit, MrThonglounSisoulith, MsPanyYathotou, DrBounthongChitmany,

MrPhankhamViphavanh, MrChansyPhosikham, DrXaysomphonePhomvihane, Lt. Gen. ChansamoneChanyalath, DrKhamphanhPhommatham, DrSinlavongKhoutphaythoune, and DrSonexaySiphandone. Nine were elected as members of the Secretariat of the 10th Party Central Committee, namely: MrBounnhangVorachit, DrBounthongChitmany, MrPhankhamViphavanh, MrChansyPhosikham, DrKhamphanhPhommatham, Lt. Gen. SengnouanXayalath, Prof. DrKikeoKhamphithoune, Major General SomkeoSilavong, and Major General VilayLakhamfong. MrPhankhamViphavanh was elected as Standing Committee Member of the Secretariat. DrBounthongChitmany was elected as President of the Inspection Committee of the Party Central Committee and eight members were elected as his deputies. The election results were included in the resolution adopted by the 10th Congress,

which was unanimously approved by congress participants. In his remarks at the closing ceremony of the congress, Secretary General Bounnhang Vorachit described the outcome of the congress as 'successful as expected'. He said that all the elected members were qualified as most of them had been tested on the battlefield during the struggle for national liberation, while the rest had been tested through their work in national development and protection tasks. The 10th Congress approved a political report on the performance of the leadership of the 9th Party Central Committee in implementing the resolution of the 9th Congress over the past five years, especially the progress made in all-round national development and protection. Participants also reviewed shortcomings resulting from the fact that some goals set in the resolution adopted by the 9th Congress had not been achieved, and discussed ways to address the situation. The congress has entrusted the new Party Central Committee to play a leading role in realising the resolution of the 10th Congress. The congress agreed with the goals set under the 8th national five-year socio-economic development plan (2016-2020) which aim to ensure that Laos graduates from least developed country status by 2020. The congress also agreed with the goals set under the 10-year socio-economic development strategy (2016-

2025) and 15-year vision until 2030, which aim to further develop Laos so that it becomes an upper middle income country by 2030. The congress assigned the 10th Party Central Committee to play a leading role in striving to achieve these goals. Secretary General Bounnhang said the consensus made at the congress to attain these goals reflected the fact that the Party attached great importance to meeting the needs of the multiethnic people. "We clearly see that the guidelines and policies that the 10th Congress has approved will continue to nurture and enhance the renovation guidelines, to be realised in line with the circumstances of our country," he said. The guidelines and policies are aimed at creating a firm foundation for Laos to move towards prosperity and socialism. Mr Bounnhang called on all Party Central Committee members to uphold their responsibilities and leadership roles and work hard to realise the resolution of the 10th Congress. The congress also approved an amendment to the Party Statute. Mr Bounnhang praised Mr Choummaly-Sayasone, Mr Thongsing Thammavong, Mr Asang Laoly and Mr Somsavat Lengsavad – the four Politburo members who did not stand for election - for their significant contribution to national liberation and development and protection tasks throughout their journey over the past decades.

(Vientiane Times 23 January 2016)

Agriculture boosts Oudomxay's socio-economic growth

(By Times Reporters)

Oudomxay province has seen an increase in crop plantations and livestock and fishery breeding groups over the past five years, contributing to the region's socio-economic growth and poverty eradication. Having recognised the province's natural potential and the diligence of its local people in working and trading, authorities have encouraged them to operate on a commercial basis, provincial Governor, Mr Phetsakhone-Luangaphay, reported recently. Provincial authorities have previously encouraged villagers to set up agriculture and livestock breeding groups so farmers can generate income directly for their families. Since 2014, production groups have expanded their plantations into 86,901 hectares with yields of 368,220 tonnes, an increase of 62 percent from 2010. The 33 most successful groups were from Sibounheuang, Chantai and Naxiengdy villages in Houn district and Samkang, Khon and Namkhong villages in Baeng district. These groups grew maize on a total of 41,405 hectares and produced yields of 193,727 tonnes, an increase of 21 percent compared to 2010. Farmers with banana plantations across 6,233 hectares produced yields of 91,276 tonnes, while 13 groups who planted organic vegetables on 6.47 hec-

tares produced yields of 876 tonnes per year. Of these groups, the most successful farmers were from Huayoun, Nalae, Nasaenkham, Laksip and Viengsa villages in Viengxay district, and Chantai and Nahom villages in Houndistrict. Rubber trees planted on 29,160 hectares produced yields of 5,631 tonnes a year. In addition, groups have planted watermelons, long beans, pumpkins, chilli, eggplant and cucumber, which can produce yields of 3,631 tonnes a year. Job's tear crops have yielded 1,400 tonnes per year. The most outstanding animal breeding groups consist of 19 pig farms with more than 1,000 pigs, as well as cattle breeding groups in some districts. Duck and chicken breeding groups supply around 4.5 million eggs a year and 200,000 small ducks and chickens a year. In addition, there are 61 fish farms that supply 525 tonnes of fish a year to domestic markets. Mr Phetsakhone said the province has a policy of encouraging farmers to take out bank loans, and by 2015 banks had issued loans totalling 2.4 trillion kip to production groups, business operators and local people. Besides that, the province has imported modern machinery for agricultural production, allowing farming methods

(Vientiane Times 25 January 2016)

Northern provinces hit by extreme cold snap

(By Times Reporter)

People and livestock in upland areas of northeastern Laos are struggling with the freezing cold as temperatures in some areas dropped to zero, while lowland areas too have been taken by surprise.



Xamneua district, Huaphan province, has experienced some of its coldest temperatures in recent memory. Thick frost is clearly visible on the ground and roofs.

Low temperatures are currently being experienced throughout the country, with the cold being accompanied by strong wind and rain in some places, notably Phongsaly, Huaphan and Xiengkhuang provinces. The temperature in Xamneua district, Huaphan province yesterday dropped to zero degrees Celsius, while Phongsaly recorded 1.5C and Xiengkhuang 0.2C, the Meteorology and Hydrology Department reported. Some upland areas of Huaphan province experienced frost. Many people commented on social networks on Sunday that it was snowing but the department confirmed that it was not. However, every part of the country will have cold weather, wind and rain in the next few days, according to weather forecasters. The department called on everyone to protect their health, keep warm and stay out of the cold, especially the elderly and children. Meanwhile Lao VIVO Company is calling for contributions from the public to help the poorest people in the hardest hit areas of Phongsaly, Huaphan and Xiengkhuang provinces. A few buffaloes in Nongkhang vil-

lage, Xamneua district, Huaphan province died due to the cold, while the provincial livestock and fisheries section expected to report more livestock deaths. One Huaphan resident, who works for the provincial Agriculture and Forestry Department, said the fine rain looked like snow but she couldn't be sure because this was the first time she had seen such a phenomenon. The lowest temperature recorded in Vientiane yesterday was 10.4C, while Oudomxay reported 5.0C, Huayxai district in Bokeo province 7.1C, LuangNamtha province 5.0C, LuangPrabang province 7.1C and Xayaboury province 8.8C. Xaysomboun province saw temperatures drop to 4.5C, Phonhong district in Vientiane province recorded 9.3C, Pakxan district, Borikhamxay province 9.7C, Km20 in Khammuan province 3.3C, Savannakhet province 10.2C, Pakxe district in Champasak province 14.5C, Saravan province 16.1C, Xekong province 12.2C, and Attapeu province 19.1C. Many other countries have also been affected by unusually cold weather. Temperatures have dropped in other parts of South East Asia as well, including Vietnam and Thailand. In Bangkok, which rarely sees temperatures below 20C, a minimum of 16C was recorded on Sunday, while Vietnam had its coldest weather in about two decades over the weekend with Hanoi recording a 6C minimum. Taiwanese media reported a rash of deaths from hypothermia and cardiac disease following a sudden drop in temperatures over the weekend. Meanwhile heavy snow forced the closure of the airport on the Korean holiday island of Jeju, with all flights cancelled. The cold spell has also hit Hong Kong, southern China and Japan, BBC News reported yesterday. Now storms have hit large parts of Japan as well, with more than 600 domestic flights cancelled across the country on Sun-

day and Monday. At least five people have died from the snow so far and more than 100

have been injured in Japan.

(Vientiane Times 26 January 2016)

Vientiane records over 6.9 trillion kip in public debt

(By Times Reporters)

Vientiane recorded public debt of more than 6.946 trillion kip, including 6.931 trillion kip of state investment debt remaining on contracts and 15 billion kip owed to utilities and other expenses. The figure was revealed at Vientiane's monthly meeting for January attended by Vientiane Mayor Dr Sinlavong Khoutphaythoune, vice mayors, directors of departments and equivalent organisations. The meeting considered and adopted a number of measures to address public debt and the financial situation. Also addressed was the agriculture and forestry development plan up to 2020, assistance for commercial cattle breeding, plans to encourage farm mechanisation for rice production, implementation of key projects in Sisattanak, Sikhottabong and Sangthong districts for fiscal years 2013-2014 and 2015-2016, and the investment plan for 2016-2017. According to a report from the Finance Department, to address public debt for fiscal year 2015-2016 Vientiane authorities were assigned to collect revenue of more than 1 trillion kip, ac-

counting for 2.85 percent of GDP (gross domestic product). So far, authorities have collected more than 221 billion kip or equal to 20.72 percent of the annual plan. Authorities have earmarked expenditure of over 619 billion kip, and up until January 18 they had recorded expenditure of 157 billion kip or about 25.35 percent of the annual plan. To successfully implement the government's 2015-2016 budget plan and resolutions of 6th Party Congress of the Vientiane Party Committee, authorities need to pay debt of 2.7 trillion kip within 5 years or an average of 554 billion kip per year. However, with revenue insufficient for the annual budget plan, the assets of That Luang market project in Xaysettha district and those along the 450 Year Road would have to be turned into capital to repay debt to the Bank of the Lao PDR. Revenue collection and other financial sources would also have to be enhanced to address the issue.

(Vientiane Times 28 January 2016)

Adventure tourism driving revenue growth in Oudomxay

(By Times Reporters)

The growing popularity of adventure activities along the Nam Kat River in Oudomxay province attracted more visitors last year driving tourism revenue growth. There is no shortage of activities with trekking, mountain climbing, biking, abseiling, zip-lining, tree-house sleepovers, camping, and traditional lifestyle education all on offer, after being introduced recently under the Forestry Area Conservation Ecological Tourism (FACET) programme. According to an official at the provincial Tourism Division, the

Nam Kat region has been designated an adventure destination for tourists. Last year's provincial tourism revenue reached US\$12 million, an increase of 19 percent on the previous year. Oudomxay province expects its tourism revenue will continue to grow this year with visitor numbers up 15 percent in recent months. The province's tourism is benefiting from being a transit stop of one or two nights for tourists, especially Pakbeng district, before they travel on to the World Heritage town of Luang Prabang. There is a

growing number of tour groups from Asia, especially China, which have steadily increased since 2014, along with increasing numbers of Europeans. European visitor numbers have risen since 2013, with most coming for trekking and home-stays to experience the local lifestyle and the traditions of ethnic groups. Last year the province received 215,448 tourists and more from Chi-

na are expected from the end of this month until Chinese New Year. However, the division is working to improve services and tourist attractions, and plans to develop Samvone Cave into another magnet for visitors. Local authorities expect surveys for infrastructure development to start within this year, aiming to get tourists to spend at least two days in the province.

(Vientiane Times 28 January 2016)

15th century Buddha image found in Champassak

(By Times Reporters)

A local fisherman has uncovered an ancient Buddha image some two kilograms in weight from the Mekong River in the Nakasang village area of Khong district, Champassak province. The ancient Buddha image is now being held for safe keeping at the Phuang-keo Temple in Kang-khong village, an ancient temple of Khong district, whilst waiting for officials from the provincial Information, Culture and Tourism Department to identify and certify its authenticity. According to local officials, a fisherman named MrKo, a resident of Nakasang village, Khong district, Champassak province, found the ancient Buddha image while he was fishing in the Mekong River. MrKo told local officials that before finding the Buddha image he dreamed of a big man with dark skin who asked MrKo "Do you want something of mine?" MrKo answered "Yes I want it" in his dream before waking suddenly. The

next morning, January 11, MrKo left home to go fishing in the Mekong River and whilst setting his nets he came across the Buddha image. He kept it at his house before calling the authorities that afternoon. Governor of Khong district, MrSananSiphaphommachanh told *Vientiane Times* yesterday that an official committee of Khong district recently visited the ancient Buddha image at Phuang-keo Temple to obtain its basic particulars. According to local officials, the ancient Buddha image is made of brass, 35 centimetres in height and about two kilogrammes in weight. It dates back to the 15th century era, MrSanansaid. He told *Vientiane Times* local officials and residents arranged a safe site for the Buddha image at the temple. It is the first ancient Buddha image to be unearthed in Khong district and as such it is believed it will be respected by residents.

(Vientiane Times 28 January 2016)

Govt approves development strategies

(By Times Reporters)

The government has approved a set of documents on future development, and will seek more appropriate mechanisms for the implementation of its plans. The approval came during the government's monthly meeting for January, which took place on Thursday. The documents include a national strategy on human resources until 2025, a national action plan on development for the next five years (2016-2020), a strategy on rural development and poverty reduction for



Mr Thongsing Thammavong chairs the government meeting yesterday.

2016-2020, and a vision for development over the next 15 years. Following opinions expressed at the meeting, the strategies and plans will be improved to take into account the achievements and shortcomings of past years. Human resources development will be reprioritised to meet the needs of socio-economic development. Meeting participants also agreed that people should be encouraged to read and learn with greater devotion, while every sector should take more responsibility for improving the skills of personnel. Concerning rural development and poverty reduction, the meeting wanted the main focus to be on poor people and families, with efforts made to encourage them to be more industrious in raising themselves out of poverty based on the circumstances

and potential of each family. With regard to the implementation of these plans, it was agreed that appropriate mechanisms, clear devolution of management and responsibility at each level, and appropriate budgetary allocations should be applied. The meeting also saw the government approve the final report on the implementation of the Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2014-15. The meeting agreed that the final year of the implementation of the seventh Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan had benefited from a positive domestic and international environment which facilitated socio-economic development. Meanwhile, the government noted the deficiencies in implementing the socio-economic, budget, and currency plans over the past year. The meeting's chairman, Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong, stressed that ministries and other government agencies, along with local administrations, should devise clearer and more detailed plans for revenue collection. Looking ahead to next month, Mr Thongsing called for political strengthening at the grassroots level, the implementation of national defence and security policies, efficient revenue collection, the completion of certain economic issues, and dedication to dry season farming activities. He asked the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment to monitor the climate and to give timely warnings of weather changes so that people could be prepared. He asked the related sectors to help people recover the losses suffered from crops and livestock that had been affected by the recent cold weather. The prime minister also touched on preparations for the National Assembly elections, the Asean-US Summit, and the Chinese and Vietnamese New Year.

(Vientiane Times 29 January 2016)