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Vous trouverez ci-joint un choix d'articles publiés au Laos en anglais dans le quotidien "Vientiane Times"

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➤ **Vientiane Times** :

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## Laos reassures Cambodia over Don Sahong hydropower project

*(By Times Reporters)*

The government has reaffirmed it will not take any action that will disadvantage its neighbours when it comes to hydropower development along the Mekong River. Deputy Prime Minister Somsavat Lengsavad paid a working visit to Cambodia last week to inform the Cambodian government regarding the development of the 260MW Don Sahong hydropower dam in Champassak province. During his visit Mr Somsavat met senior Cambodian government officials including Prime Minister Hun Sen, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia Hor Namhong and Deputy Prime Minister Sok An. During the talks Mr Somsavat reiterated that the Lao government will develop hydropower projects with responsibility and transparency and is willing to release information to interested nations and people. He explained that hydropower development is aimed at sourcing funding for national development and will enable Laos to graduate from Least Developed Country status by 2020. The Lao government seeks to attract both domestic and foreign investment to develop hydropower projects on the Mekong and its tributaries in a sustainable and safe manner by hiring world-class consulting firm Pöyry Energy Ltd and France's Compagnie Nationale du Rhone to oversee the design and construction of the projects. Using lessons learnt from the US\$3.5 billion Xayaboury dam, the government has approved the construction of the

Don Sahong dam in Champassak province in southern Laos. Construction of the run-of-river project with an installed capacity of 260MW and costing about US\$500 million is expected to begin next month. The government has vowed to strictly comply with the 1995 Mekong Agreement, as was the case with the Xayaboury project. The government is also committed to keeping alive the spirit of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, which aims to promote comprehensive co-operation for sustainable development in the region. The National Assembly has given the go-ahead for the Don Sahong dam and the concession agreement between the Lao government and the developer (Mega First) has been signed with the concession period set at 25 years. The Don Sahong dam will be capable of generating about 2,000 GWh of electricity per year and is expected to start commercial operation in early 2020. In March, Mega First signed an agreement with state-owned utility Electricite du Laos (EDL) to regulate its participation in building the dam. Under the agreement, EDL will hold 20 percent of the Laos-incorporated Don Sahong Power Company Ltd (DSPC) while Ground Roses and Silver Acreage will hold 79 percent and one percent respectively. Mega First has already spent RM57 million (over US\$13.3 million) on a feasibility study of the project and has built access roads and a bridge leading to the construction site.

*(Vientiane Times 12 October 2015)*

## Laos confident about development of Don Sahong dam

(By SomsackPongkhao)

Deputy Prime Minister Somsavat Lengsavad is confident the run-of-river Don Sahong dam in Champassak province will be a success after learning more about the processes involved in the scheme. Mr Somsavat went to the project site in southern Laos on Sunday after visiting Cambodia from October 4-7 to reassure the Cambodian government about the construction of the 260MW dam. The main aim of his visit was to see the site first-hand and get a sense of the natural and social environment of the project area, which lies in the far south of Champassak province. During his visit, Mr Somsavat heard a report about the dam, particularly the issues related to water flow, fish passage and water quality. Surveys conducted by foreign experts enabled Laos to explain to interested people that everything about the project has been done in a scientific, transparent and open manner which should help to minimise concerns about the project. The Governor of Khong district in Champassak province, Mr Sanan Siphaphommachan, told *Vientiane Times* that villagers were waiting for work on the dam to begin as they believed it would bring development to their area. "I am confident that this project will facilitate development and poverty reduction in our district. Once facilities here including roads are

completed, it makes it easier for tourists to visit our islands," he said. "The developer has provided us with two irrigation projects that should boost rice yields for our villagers." Pre-project activities are now being carried out including road and bridge construction, to facilitate access to the project site, pending the start of construction. The construction of a US\$7-million bridge leading to the site is now complete but it will take another 18 months to build road access. The dam has been under study and review for eight years. The Lao government has gone through both the notification and prior consultation processes for the US\$500-million project. Several agreements relating to the project have been signed including a concession agreement, and a purchase agreement has been signed with Electricite du Laos (EDL). But the agreement with the contractors to actually build the dam has yet to be concluded. With a concession period of 25 years, it is expected the dam will generate about 2,000 GWh of electricity per year, which will be sold to EDL. The government said construction of the dam is aimed at sourcing funding for development purposes and will help Laos to graduate from the UN's least developed country status by 2020.

(*Vientiane Times* 12 October 2015)

## Laos looking at 7 percent growth in tourist arrivals

(By Times Reporters)

Tourist arrivals are believed to have grown by 7 percent growth last fiscal year (2014-2015) thanks to better marketing and the promotion of tourist sites in Laos.



The number of Korean visitors to Laos is increasing now there are direct flights between the two countries.

According to the latest report from the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the number of tourist arrivals in

Laos

reached 4.4 million last fiscal year, up from 4.1 million the previous year. This is attributed to campaigns to publicise Lao tourist attractions in targeted markets. The ministry's tourism development report also states that income earned from tourism in fiscal year 2014-15 was US\$672 million. The tourism sector is one of the top five foreign exchange earners in Laos. The Ministry of Planning and Investment collects statistics from all ministries and state agencies so the government can create appropriate policies to boost the development of the sectors concerned. An official in charge of tourism data said the figure cited in the government report was a projection. However, he was confident the number of tourist arrivals would meet the target thanks to more widespread marketing

campaigns. Mr Bounthavy Sisava also said there was nothing that should prevent Laos from meeting its tourism growth target, adding that the regional and world tourism situation were favourable for the growth of tourism in Laos. "There have been no disease outbreaks or airport closures this year so I believe the number of tourist arrivals will meet the 4.4 million target," he said. He said officials had collected data on tourist arrivals over the first nine months of the 2014-2015 fiscal year, from all border crossings and international airports in Laos. The data shows that tourist arrivals are on track to reach the 4.4 million figure. According to the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, the driving force of tourism growth in Laos is the increasing number of visitors from Thailand, Vietnam and China. Mr Bounthavy, who is Deputy Director of the Tourism Research and Administrative Division, said the available data indicated a rapid growth in tourists from the Republic of Korea, and that the figures showed a more than 10 percent increase. In contrast, the number of tourists from Japan had fallen by about 2 percent. The increase in tourist arrivals from Korea is the result of the start of direct flights between Vientiane and Seoul, which began a few years ago. Korean tourists like Laos because it is peaceful and they also like Lao culture and the warm and humid weather.

(Vientiane Times 13 October 2015)

## Vientiane's organic farmers seek permanent markets

(By Times Reporters)

Growers of organic vegetables in Vientiane are seeking permanent marketplaces where they can sell their produce. A senior member of the Vientiane Organic Farmers' Group Mr Bountham Phimphong told *Vientiane Times* recently that growers are now unsure of the situation because of varying markets. "Most growers of organic vegetables in Vientiane are worried about markets which are not permanent fixtures because we were asked to move many times over the last few years," he said. He also noted that farmers are quite confident of being able to meet the demand for organic produce but a market that is not fixed in its location is an unsolved problem and is causing farmers to be hesitant over the amount of vegetables they will grow. At the same time, the relevant sector of the government should also help farmers through legislation because the group has experienced rejection by contract companies. "Over the past few years, we have had a bitter experience with a company that signed a contract with us. In the agreement we signed, they were to buy a large quantity of our produce but finally they only bought a few kilogrammes from individual members of our group," Mr Bountham said. He said it was obvious the company had broken the agreement but the group cannot do anything about it at all. "We made a complaint to the authorities in Vientiane but there has been

no sign of a result on the complaint and everything has now gone completely quiet," he said. An organic market has operated at the That Luang esplanade since 2006. It opened two days per week, displaying several hundred tonnes of organic produce on Wednesdays and Saturdays but now the group has had to move to Huayhong market and the Asean shopping mall. "The owner of Huayhong market gives us a chance to display our organic goods at their place but we still have to take a bit longer to let our regular customers know about it," he said. Meanwhile the organic market at Chao Fa Ngum Park that takes place every Monday will also be relocated because the park belongs to the public through the Vientiane authority, Mr Bountham added. Vientiane has some 15-16 groups of organic vegetable growers but the difficulty to find a permanent market is still a problem, making them hesitant over whether they will continue with their long-time occupation or permanently stop growing vegetables.

Laos has the potential benefits of high quality soil, fresh air and clean water for organic production, so the government will need to pay more attention to promoting local growers by allowing them access to finance and doing proper market research.

(*Vientiane Times* 13 October 2015)

## Vientiane airport to be expanded

(By PhetsamoneChandala)

Expansion of Vientiane's Wattay International Airport will begin this year to meet growing passenger demand and accommodate VIP aircraft and delegations during the Asean Summit in November 2016.



MrYakuaLopangkao exchanges contracts with the Executive Officer and Director of the International Division of Hazama Ando Corporation, Mr Hideo Matsumoto.

In 2011, the total number of passengers passing through the airport was 520,000 people but by 2014 this had risen to 1.1 million people. It is expected that the number of passengers will reach 2.8 million by 2028 due to increasing foreign investment in Laos and the growth of tourism, as well as the establishment of the Asean Economic Community (AEC) at the end of this year. To cope with the growth in demand, the government of Laos requested an Official Development Assistance (ODA) loan from the Japanese government for the expansion of the airport. A contract for the work was signed on Monday between the Department of Civil Aviation and Hazama Ando Corporation. Witnessing the signing were Minister of Public Works and Transport Dr Bounchan Sinthavong, Japanese Ambassador to Laos Mr Hiroyuki Kishino, and JICA Laos Office Chief Representative Mr Yusuke Mu-

rakami. Director General of the Department of Civil Aviation, Mr Yakua Lopangkao, said the Vientiane International Airport Terminal Expansion Project was funded by a Japanese ODA loan with the purpose of providing more facilities to serve the growing number of passengers, which had increased rapidly over the years. The scope of the project involves expansion of the international passenger terminal building, construction of a new domestic terminal building, construction of an airport maintenance workshop, extension of car parking space, construction of an approach road, construction of a rapid exit taxiway, and the installation of technical facilities. The total budget for construction is JPY 7.5 billion (about US\$61 million). Construction will take 32 months and will begin this year and end in 2018, with a 12 month project warranty period. Laos will host the Asean Summit next year so essential parts of the project will be completed by then. Mr Yakua said he was confident the project would be complete by 2018 as the Department of Civil Aviation had selected the most qualified contractor, Hazama Ando Corporation. The company has a lot of experience in airport construction and has undertaken projects in many countries. Hazama was also the contractor for the Vientiane International Apron Expansion Project in 2012, which was of high quality. "The completion of this project will significantly contribute to and support the government's socio-economic development plan in general and in particular it will boost trade, tourism and investment in Laos," Mr Yakua said.

(Vientiane Times 14 October 2015)

## Nation vows steadiness, balance, sustainability in development

(By SomxaySengdara)

Steady, balanced and quality development in a sustainable and green way with the highly effective use and management of resources is the plan of the government for the nation for 2015/16.



*Mr Thongsing Thammavong speaks at the meeting.*

The direction of development was reaffirmed at a meeting concluded in Vientiane yesterday to disseminate instructions on the implementation of the development plan for the fiscal year, at which core officials from the planning and investment sector throughout the country attended. At the meeting, Minister of Planning and Investment Mr Somdy Duangdy reminded participants about the government having recently approved a new method of implementation which is called 'outcome based', which is different from implementation in the past, which focused on the target set by sectors or 'sector based'. He noted the general objective of the plan aimed to secure political stability, strong peace and social order, reduction of poverty for the entire nation, and take the country from least developed status by 2020. The minister also noted the three major targets the nation has to achieve in the next five years: to develop the economy and society together with environmental protection and human resource development. Despite good achievements having been made in development in previous years, the nation

has experienced a deficiency in its implementation, which especially led to a huge loss of state property and created massive public debt. In his address at the meeting yesterday, Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong called for consolidating domestic production in the first place, which he said would reduce the fragility of the national economy from the impacts of external factors. He stressed the effective management of the use of natural resources, and the building of development based on the potentials and advantage of the country. About this, Mr Thongsing pushed the ministry on thinking about electrical energy, for which the country has an advantage, but is still importing large quantities of the power. The same as on mineral resources, he said that despite the sector being the first ranked in generating income for the nation, the ministry has to review its development following the fall of mineral prices. About economic growth, he told the ministry to pay great attention to real family incomes, saying whether they had increased following the GDP growth or not. Regarding funding mobilisation for development, Prime Minister Thongsing reminded participants that 34.5 trillion kip (30 percent of GDP) will be needed for development in the fiscal year, which he said the country has the potential to do, but effective management must involve close attention. At the meeting, he also reminded the participants about the government decision on the absolute postponement of the transference of state assets to capital, while he advised the ministry to pledge in drafting the related regulations for implementation of the policy in future. He stressed to the ministry about development project selection through strict respect for the Law on Investment.

(Vientiane Times 14 October 2015)

## Disaster damage in Laos no less than in other countries

(By SomsackPongkhao)

Although Laos is not as hard hit by major natural disasters compared to other countries in the region, their frequency and the nation's inability to cope with and recover from cumulative losses are major challenges.



Five houses were demolished when this riverbank collapsed in Thaphabath district, Borikhamxay province, on Sunday. -- Photo Pathedlao Lao Facebook

This was the message delivered by the Minister of Natural Resources and Environment and Vice Chairman of the National Disaster Prevention and Control Committee, MrSommadPholsena, to mark Asean Day for Disaster Management and International Day for Disaster Reduction this week. "Natural disasters affecting Laos mostly consist of floods, which have occurred almost every year since 2000. These extreme events can be considered small scale but occur on a regular basis compared to less frequent but massive weather extremes in neighbouring and other regional countries. Added up, the cumulative losses and damage are relatively similar in magnitude based on the same timeframe," MrSommadsaid. A senior official from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, MsSonephetPhosarath, agreed with the minister. She said in some regions of Laos communities suffered flooding and landslides several times a year, which hindered recovery efforts by local people and the government. "We don't have major weather events like other countries, but the damage to our nation and people is

no less compared to that of other countries in the region," she said. Over the past 10 years, Laos has suffered widespread flooding and landslides, notably when Tropical Storm Kamuri lashed the country in 2008. 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. In 2013 the damage from natural disasters was estimated to exceed 1,000 billion kip. Flooding and landslides killed 29 people, and more than 350,000 people were affected to varying degrees. Last year, only three people died in extreme weather events but the damage to agriculture as well as to houses, schools, roads and other infrastructure was significant. This year, five people have so far died in floods and landslides. Four of the five deaths were reported in Nan district, LuangPrabang province, where flash flooding and a landslide occurred last month. Last Sunday, torrential rain again caused flooding and led to severe erosion of the Mekong riverbank in Thaphabath district, Borikhamxay province, resulting in the loss of five houses. Several other houses nearby have been evacuated following the collapse of the riverbank. Fortunately, no one died or was injured in the incident. Laos set up the National Disaster Management Committee several years ago in which all government sectors are represented. But MsSonephet pointed out that there was no clear plan for the permanent evacuation of people living in disaster-risk areas and more discussion was needed before any action or project could be carried out.

(Vientiane Times 15 October 2015)

## Ministry reaffirms plan to issue 400,000 land titles by 2020

*(By Souksakhone Vaenkeo )*

Land management authorities will pursue their plan to issue 400,000 land titles over the next five years until 2020, the Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and Environment has said. Statistics show there are 2.6 million land plots across the country including 1.8 million for which land titles have not been issued. The Deputy Minister, Mr Sisavath Vithaxay, admitted that the ministry is unlikely to achieve the target set to issue one million land titles by the end of this year. He spoke to local media during his attendance at the recent three-day biannual meeting between the government cabinet, Vientiane Mayor and provincial governors in Vientiane. Of the 2.6 million land plots, some 1.2 million plots have been registered into and managed by a computerised system. Mr Sisavath said his ministry will pursue the new plan to register land documents pertaining to 500,000 plots into the computerised system over the next five years. If achieved, it will bring the total to 1.7 million plots registered and managed by the computerised system. "We will strive to achieve the targets," he said, referring to the targets set to issue 400,000 land titles and register 500,000 land plots into a computerised system. He added that proper management and clear information on land plots will enable the Ministry of Finance to collect land tax more efficiently. National Assembly (NA) members have said issuing land titles to people in rural areas is critically important as it will enhance their land ownership

rights. The parliamentarians said they have learnt that rural people whose land has not been protected by a title deed have been taken advantage of when developers have taken possession of their land as the compensation paid was unreasonably low. Debating a draft National Land Policy at the Assembly's fifth ordinary session in July 2013, NA members recommended full recognition of the land use rights of people who had inherited land from their parents over generations, even though they did not have a land title. NA members said it was the officials who were slow in issuing land titles, especially in rural communities. According to procedure, the process to obtain a land title for one plot can take about three months. On average, about 160,000 kip is charged as a service fee for issuing a land title to cover basic expenses under the government-funded programme. In an essential case, consideration is also given to a request to issue a land title for a plot that is not located in an area where the government-funded land title issuance programme has been introduced, said Deputy Director General of the ministry's Land Administration Department, Mr Anothai Chanthalsy. This could be someone who needs a land title for business purposes, he explained. There have also been reports of some individuals approaching officials and asking them to provide special services and issue a title in exchange for a bribe. Those officials found guilty were reportedly disciplined.

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