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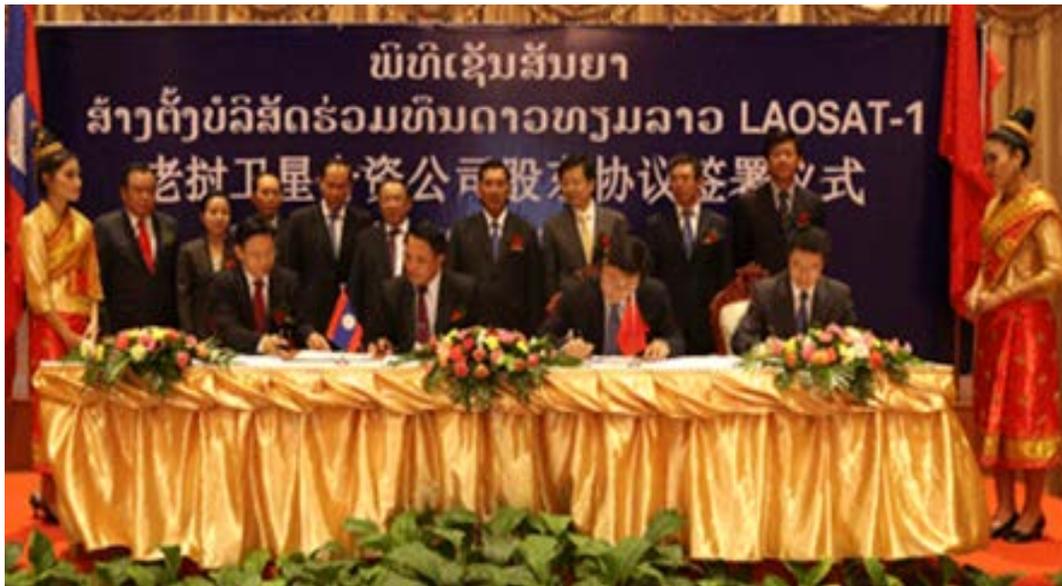
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Revue de presse du 02 au 06 Novembre 2015



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

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Lao satellite to go into orbit this month

(By Times Reporters)

Laos' first telecommunications satellite (Lao Sat-1) will be launched into orbit on November 21 to spur many facets of development and industry. The satellite, which is owned by the Lao Sat-1 Joint Venture Company, will be part of a network of satellites in Laos and overseas that provide various communication services.



Deputy Minister of Finance Mr Bounchom Ubonpaseth (seated, second left) and Chinese company representatives sign the satellite agreement in Vientiane last week witnessed by Deputy Prime Minister Dr Bounpone Bouttanavong (standing, fourth right).
--Photo Khamphan

It will enhance communication links for government work, television transmission, rural and remote communications, long distance education, medical, telecoms and internet links, as well as facilitating relief efforts in times of natural disasters. A shareholders agreement for the Lao Sat-1 Joint Venture Company was signed in Vientiane on Friday between the Lao government and three Chinese developers. Representing the Lao government was Deputy Minister of Finance Mr Bounchom Ubonpaseth. The Chinese shareholders were represented by the President of the China Asia-Pacific Mobile Telecommunications Satellite Co., Ltd. (APMT), Mr Han Qingping, Vice President of Space Star Technology Co. Ltd. (SSTC),

Mr Li Jilin, and Asia-Pacific Satellite Technology (APST) executive, Mr Yao Yong. Also present at the signing were Deputy Prime Minister Dr Bounpone Bouttanavong, Minister of Finance Dr Lien Thikeyo, Chinese Ambassador to Laos Mr Guan Huabing, other Lao government officials and Chinese representatives. The Lao government will hold a 45 percent stake in the Lao Sat-1 Joint Venture Company, while APMT has a 35 percent shareholding, SSTC has 15 percent, and APST has a 5 percent stake. "The launch of the satellite by China is a special gift to Laos to mark the 40th anniversary of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on December 2," Minister of Posts and Telecommunications Mr Hiem Phommachanh said. The satellite will be launched from China into the 128.5 degrees East orbital slot, which has been specifically allocated to Laos. Work on the satellite project began in 2008 but was delayed while funding was procured. Then in 2012, the Lao government signed a US\$259 million loan agreement with the Export-Import Bank of China. "Laos is very proud to have its own satellite for the purposes of socio-economic advancement. It will also be an important source of income," Mr Hiem said. The satellite launch is part of government efforts to propel the country towards industrialisation and employ advanced technology for telecommunications. Mr Hiem said the many years of experience of the Chinese shareholders in the Lao Sat-1 Joint Venture Company would result in a profitable venture that would also benefit society

(Vientiane Times 02 Novembre 2015)

New Mekong bridge able to carry 80-tonne trucks

By KhonesavanhLatsaphao

The new Nasak-Khokkhaodor Bridge is being built across the Mekong River to link the provinces of Xayaboury and Vientiane and will be able to carry trucks weighing up to 80 tonnes. If none of them are trucks, the bridge can carry 10 vehicles at a time but their combined weight must be less than 40 tonnes. The project manager in charge of construction, Mr Bouavieng Champaphan, told *Vientiane Times* on Friday the bridge will be finished in three months' time after construction began in 2012. Funding for the bridge has been provided through grant aid from the Netherlands of 2.3 million euros (over 20 billion kip). The bridge itself is made of iron but the road is made of concrete mixed with steel. "At 365 metres, this will be the longest metal bridge in Laos. The Thangon Bridge that crosses the Nam Ngum River in Vientiane is the second longest metal bridge," Mr Bouavieng said. If well maintained, the bridge should last for 100 years. Vientiane is 204km from the Nasak-Khokkhaodor Bridge, which is reached by Road No. 11. It connects Nasak village in Paklai district, Xayaboury province, to Khokkhaodor village in Xanakham district, Vientiane province, and is the third bridge

linking Xayaboury with neighbouring provinces. The other two are the bridge spanning the Mekong River between Thadeua village in Xayaboury province and Pakkhone village in Luang Prabang province, while the third crosses the Mekong at Pakbaeng, linking Xayaboury and Oudomxay provinces. The Nasak-Khokkhaodor Bridge will ease tourist travel from Loei province in Thailand to Vientiane via Road No. 4 in Xayaboury province and Road No. 11 on the left side of the Mekong River. National Road No. 11 along the Mekong also links with Road No. 13 North at the Lao-Thai border crossing in Vang village, Vientiane province. According to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Netherlands Development Assistance (NEDA) helped with consultancy on the survey and design of an additional section of Road No. 11 from the Namsang Bridge in Sangthong district, Vientiane, to the Nasak-Khokkhaodor Bridge in Xanakham district, Vientiane province, over a distance of about 150 kilometres. It is expected the survey and design work will be completed within one year and then the tender process for construction will begin.

(*Vientiane Times* 02 Novembre 2015)

Agriculture experts review northern uplands development

(By PhetphoxaySengpaseuth)

Agricultural experts met in Vientiane on Friday to review the Northern Uplands Development Programme (NUDP) for 2014-15 and discuss the plans for 2015-16. Participants reported on progress and noted the content of future plans comprising the systematic registration of land, legal awareness creation, local governance and planning, and facilitating the emergence of farmer organisations in the target provinces. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Dr Phouangparisak Pravongviengkham. The programme principally works in the three northern provinces of Phongsaly, Huaphan and Luang Prabang, covering 10 districts and three villages in each district. It was initially set for four years starting in October 2010 but has been extended until the end of March 2016. NUDP representative Mr Khamson Sysahnouth, speaking at the VI National Steering Committee NUDP Workshop, said the overall objective of the programme was to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development in the northern uplands. The specific objective is the achievement of secure and improved livelihoods of the rural poor in selected areas of the northern uplands based on sustainable land and natural resources management and community-driven development. "Overall, since the start of the programme, land use planning (including both participatory land

use planning [PLUP] and participatory agriculture land management [PALM]) has been completed in all NUDP 231 target villages. PLUP has been completed in 187 villages and the newer process, PALM, has been implemented in 28 villages," Mr Khamson said. Systematic land registration had been completed in 39 villages, with 4,448 parcels registered and 3,752 titles handed over. In 2014 emphasis shifted to communal land registration (CLR) of large communal agricultural and village forest areas. Since then 29 villages had been covered, with 257 plots registered, representing a total area of 11,260 hectares, Mr Khamson added. However, there was insufficient government budget to fund systematic land registration in rural areas with the legal framework for CLR not yet in place as approvals of the new land policy and land law were still pending. This meant no communal titles had been handed over to the villages involved. The NUDP is the first step by the government and key development partners in piloting a Programme Based Approach in the agriculture and rural development sector. The programme receives financial support from Agence Française de Développement, the European Union, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

(Vientiane Times 02 Novembre 2015)

Dubai charity gives boost to education in Oudomxay

(By Times Reporters)

Plan International in Laos is channelling assistance through the Ministry of Education and Sports to improve access to education in Oudomxay province.



Ms Yuko Yoneda (left) shakes hands with Mr Khonthavy Mingboupha at the signing ceremony.

Grant assistance of over US\$4 million (about 33 billion kip) to fund the project was provided by Dubai Cares, a philanthropic organisation working to improve children's access to quality primary education in developing countries. The grant agreement was signed in Vientiane on Friday by Plan International in Laos' Deputy Country Director, Ms Yuko Yoneda, and Deputy Director of the Oudomxay provincial Education and Sports Department, Mr Khonthavy Mingboupha. The signing was witnessed by senior officials from the Ministry of Education and Sports, representatives from both sides and other invited guests. The three-year project will run until 2018 in Houn, Pakbaeng, Nga and Namor districts. It aims to develop the basic infrastructure of the education, nutrition and health environments, along with other related activities. Speaking at the signing ceremony Ms Yoneda said "We are very proud to bring better educational opportunities to Lao children." "It is critically important that the benefits of the project should

be enjoyed by people in the respective local communities as these are the most significant characteristics of the groundwork we hope to lay." Mr Khonthavy thanked Plan International in Laos for its generous support and expressed hope for further cooperation in the near future, saying "Providing assistance to children in the target districts will help them to have a better future." "The development of human resources is key to economic progress and national growth," he added. The projects will help to improve the educational environment of the schools involved and boost student enrolment rates, especially among children in remote areas. Plan International Laos is recognised as a leader in education and is using its expertise in the field to champion quality education for all children. Many children in Laos' poor districts are never enrolled in primary school, and less than one third complete five years of primary education. Girls from ethnic groups have the lowest enrolment and completion rates. Plan is partnering with children, schools, parents and the government to ensure that all primary school age children reach essential learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy, enabling their continuation onto secondary school. The work includes increasing community involvement in education, supporting school-based teacher training in mathematics and other key subjects, improving classroom practices and giving children better access to school materials. Plan provides teaching aids, classroom equipment and furniture and improves access to education for the poorest through the provision of targeted scholarships, especially for girls, vulnerable children and those from ethnic groups.

(Vientiane Times 03 Novembre 2015)

New VAT invoices distributed to boost revenue collection

(By Times Reporters)

Many people in Vientiane have begun to request the newly made Value Added Tax (VAT) invoices after learning the receipts may contain prizes, with tax officials hoping that the new incentives will boost revenue collection.



A customer shows one of the VAT invoices, which contains a lucky scratch patch.

“I’d like a VAT invoice because I may win a prize,” said a customer at a small barber shop in Phontong village, Chanthabouly district, Vientiane last weekend. “If this invoice really contains prizes, it is better than buying a lottery ticket.” The barber shop owner said many people found the new VAT invoices interesting as they had a chance to win prizes the same as buying the scratch lottery. One reason is that people feel that even if they do not win a prize, their tax contribution will really go to the government coffers. The Vientiane Finance Department produced and distributed the new invoices, which contain lucky scratch panels, a few months ago, hoping the new incentive would encourage consumers to ask for the official receipts after purchasing goods and services. In the past, business owners were not honest about declaring their income so it was difficult for tax officials to calculate the

amount of VAT that business owners should pay to the government. The introduction of the new invoice will force business owners to issue receipts to customers so tax officials can estimate how much income a business generates in a month. A barber shop owner, Ms Ploy, said she did not have much idea about the new invoices but had to give them to customers in accordance with advice from tax officials. She said she was cooperating with the authorities over tax collection. “I don’t know what percentage of my income has to be given to the authorities. I just listen to tax officials and follow their advice,” she said, adding that normally her shop pays annual income tax of 145,000 kip and monthly income tax of 45,000 kip. When asked if she has to pay 10 percent of her income as tax to the authorities in accordance with the VAT Law, she replied that it was too expensive. She did not believe this policy would be practical, adding that many shop owners would refuse to give the invoices to their customers. “I found out that I have to pay annual tax higher than what I used to. I may not issue the invoices to everyone,” she said. The government permitted the Vientiane authorities to launch this new tax collection scheme a few years ago and plans to expand and apply this concept in the provinces if the pilot project in the capital city is found to be successful. According to tax officials, the total prizes contained in the new VAT invoice are valued at 140 billion kip. The top prize is a Benz E 250. The second prize is a China-made BYD car. Invoice receivers also have a chance to win other prizes if they send an SMS of numbers found in the scratch area to 6888.

(Vientiane Times 03 Novembre 2015)

Don Sahong dam critical for development of southern Laos

(By Times Reporters)

The government regards the Don Sahong hydropower project as the key driver for socio-economic development and poverty reduction in southern Laos. Deputy Minister of Energy and Mines Mr Viraphonh Viravong told *Vientiane Times* yesterday that the power generated by the US\$500-million dam will be used to electrify areas currently without power in the southern provinces, while the remainder will be exported. Located in Khong district, Champassak province, construction of the run-of-river dam is expected to start at the end of this month. The government has gone through all the processes stipulated in the 1995 agreements including the notification and prior consultation processes for the project and has informed its neighbours about related developments. Most of the agreements concerning the dam have been signed including a concession agreement and a purchase agreement, which has been signed with Electricite du Laos (EDL). The Governor of Khong district, Mr Sanan Siphaphommachan, said villagers were waiting for work on the 260MW dam to begin as they believed it would bring development to their area. "I believe this project will not only be beneficial for community development but will also generate job opportunities for local people to alleviate their poverty," he said. The construction of a US\$7-million

bridge leading to the site is now complete but it will take another 18 months to complete road access. Mr Sanan said the bridge would not only facilitate the transport of goods and people but also improve tourism activities in the district. The project developer will build new roads on Don Sadam and Don Sahong. In addition, the project will provide job training for local people, notably in crop growing, animal husbandry and fish processing, as well as capacity building among the local community. "The project developer is committed to helping us to build schools and hospitals for local people, pending the start of construction," he said. Project official in charge of the community programme, Mr Bounpheng Duangmala, said "Over the past year, we have built toilets and restored schools to create better conditions for children to learn." Mr Bounpheng said 42 families from six villages have been taken for job training in fields such as mechanics and welding. "We plan to build a new school, library and market for people to sell their products," he said, adding that villagers affected by the project will be compensated with new concrete houses. With a concession period of 25 years, it is expected the dam will generate about 2,000 GWh of electricity per year. It is expected to start commercial operation in 2019 or 2020.

(*Vientiane Times* 03 Novembre 2015)

Japan funds Phongsaly maternal, child health project

(By BounfaengPhaymanivong)

The government of Japan has approved more than US\$180,000 to fund the “Enhancement for Maternal and Child Health in Mountainous areas of Laos” project. The project will focus on Phongsaly province, where disadvantaged rural people, especially mothers and children, have limited access to healthcare services. It is also designed to increase the number of people using these services. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the project was signed yesterday by the Country Representative of the Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan), Mr Noriyasu Okayama, and Phongsaly province Health Department Deputy Director, Mr Phonpadith Phonmanivong. Speaking at the signing ceremony, Mr Okayama said the project would help the Ministry of Health in its efforts to improve the health of mothers and children and service delivery. “As Phongsaly is one of the remotest areas of Laos, the project may encounter difficulties but cooperation with experienced personnel in the department will deliver a good result,” he said. The MoU is for a one-year project but the AAR Japan would observe progress during the first year, and plan and propose an extension for another two years. Project activities include the provision of medical equipment for maternal and child healthcare services, training in the maintenance of the equipment, and on hygiene and effective management. The project

will be rolled out in the provincial hospital, Phongsaly district hospital, provincial Mother and Child Health unit, Phongsaly district Mother and Child Health unit, and two health centres in Phongsaly district. The initiative will also develop educational materials for a Maternal and Child Health workshop and conduct training for healthcare staff to reinforce services. Another focus will be improving outreach activities to provide effective maternal and child health services in remote mountainous villages. Healthcare personnel will conduct maternal and child health workshops for villagers and provide antenatal care, postnatal care and growth monitoring along with routine vaccination outreach activities. Since 2000, AAR Japan has supported the production of wheelchairs at a workshop located in the Centre for Medical Rehabilitation in Vientiane and promoted the social participation of people with disabilities. From September 2010 to June 2014, AAR Japan provided first aid training for village health volunteers to reduce the impact of unexploded ordnance (UXO) accidents in Xiengkhuang province. Since mid 2014, AAR Japan has been implementing a project promoting small scale entrepreneurship for people with disabilities in Vientiane and Xayaboury provinces and the capital. It also plans to open a new project office in Phongsaly province to enable closer cooperation with local authorities.

(Vientiane Times 03 Novembre 2015)

First air shipment of cattle touches down via Boeing in Laos

(By BounfaengPhaymanivong)

Some 300 head of Australian cattle touched down in Vientiane yesterday, bound for a Japanese cattle breeding operation in Xiengkhuang province. The Japanese company has invested a total of US\$5 million for cattle farming in Laos, aiming to create and develop a brand new business in Xiengkhuang province, with capital investment in the enterprise set to grow in the years ahead.



A herd of over 300 cattle arrives in Vientiane via a Boeing 747-400 Freighter from Australia yesterday.

Lao-Japan Agro Development Company Limited is confident that Xiengkhuang province will be an ideal supply base for beef products for local consumption and Asean markets as demand is on the rise year by year. As part of the cattle farming investment plan for meat and milk production, some 300 head of cattle were airfreighted in from Australia yesterday. They will be farmed on the concession land in Xiengkhuang province. The company's Chairman MrTomoyuki Nakayama told the media that Xiengkhuang province is one of the most ideal cattle production bases but has not yet been properly developed due to the Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) problems and poor traffic infrastructure for transportation. "We decided to invest in cattle farming in this province because of its potential benefits for cattle farming and agriculture," he said. MrNakayama also informed that cur-

rently the company has invested a total of US\$5 million as the first phase of the investment project, on a concession of 2,000 hectares of land, granted by the Xiengkhuang provincial Investment Department. "By next year, the investment capital will climb to US\$10 million and in a couple of years will reach US\$20 million and later on it should hit US\$50 million," he said, adding that the amount will be increased gradually in line with the capital expenditure year by year. He added that the company will also work on improvements to the soil to allow it to grow improved pastures as cattle feed. "We also intend to provide educational training for local villagers and they will be also hired by the farming project and equipped with professional farming skills," Mr Nakayama said. The ceremony for the arrival of the first charter flight of cattle from Australia to Laos at Wattay International Airport in Vientiane yesterday was witnessed by Minister of Agriculture and Forestry DrPhetPhomphiphak and Deputy Governor of Xiengkhuang province DrBouasoneSinuanthong. DrBouasone said that the investment by Lao-Japan Agro Development Company Limited in the cattle farming venture will also meet the guidelines of the local development plan as it will create job opportunities for local villagers. "The project will also benefit the local authorities because they are improving the quality of the soil and land as well," he added. According to the company plan, it intends to import 300 head Holstein heifers for milking and 600 head of beef cattle heifers by charter flight from Australia in November or December. They then plan to import an additional 600 head of Holstein heifers and 300 head of beef cattle in March or April next year.

(Vientiane Times 04 Novembre 2015)

Govt strengthens agricultural promotion for integration

(By Times Reporters)

The government is taking steps to promote and develop various agricultural products in the face of regional competition and international integration. Officials from the various concerned sectors implementing the “Sustainable food security and agricultural product promotion for commercial basis” project met in Vientiane yesterday to discuss the progress of the initiative as well as policies and plans for agriculture development



Mr Somsavat Lengsavad.

The project coordination committee included ministers and deputy ministers from various different ministries, officials from the Bank of the Lao PDR along with provincial representatives from around the country. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has allocated nine priority provinces and the capital Vientiane to produce rice for food security, or about 2.5 million tonnes a year of which 200,000 tonnes was for stockpiling, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Dr Phouangparisak Pravongviengkham reported at the meeting. Those provinces are Bokeo, Luang Namtha, Xayaboury, Vientiane, Borikhamxay, Khammuan, Savannakhet, Saravan and Champassak as well as the capital. These areas include about 786,000 hectares of rice, of which 315,000 hectares are in irrigation areas, the deputy minister reported. “These priority areas are

able produce around 3.2 million tonnes of rice or cover 85 percent of country's rice production but the irrigation areas of 10 provinces produced only 1.5 million tonnes or about 46 percent of the country's 951,000 hectares of rice,” Dr Phouangparisak added. The provinces have surplus rice and some are selling it to other provinces and also exporting it across the border. Despite a rice production surplus in these provinces, some 60 percent of rice production was in areas still outside irrigation areas, which were at risk of impacts from climate change, especially drought and flooding, he explained. To guarantee sustainable rice production it is therefore necessary to expand the irrigation areas for agriculture. The ministry was also focusing on livestock and fish promotion as well as other crops for the domestic market and export, Dr Phouangparisak added. For the project to meet its targets it will also require a sufficient budget allocation and suitable policies for agri-business entrepreneurs, particularly regarding electricity costs and bank loan interest rates. Agriculture is a basic priority for development to improve the living conditions of Lao people as most of them are still dependent on it. To help alleviate people from poverty and receive higher incomes, Deputy Prime Minister, Mr Somsavat Lengsavad asked every relevant sector to implement effective plans and cooperate closely on the project. He stressed the need for human resource development to meet demand and to enhance agricultural production quality to the standard required for competition as part of the Asean Economic Community. Mr Somsavat also suggested the relevant sector should resolve labour related issues, with agricultural workers still receiving low wages in Laos.

(Vientiane Times 04 Novembre 2015)

Plans firm up for education development

(By Times Reporters)

Senior education officials and development partners gathered in Vientiane yesterday for a meeting of the Education Sector Working Group (ESWG) to endorse the sub-sector plan of the education sector development plan for 2016-20 before submission to the Ministry of Planning and Investment. Another key objective of the meeting was to approve the Working Group's joint statement before sharing it with other delegates at the High Level Round Table meeting to be held later this month. During the meeting, participants drew up a plan for the effective operations of the ESWG, as there are still many issues in the education sector that need to be urgently addressed, especially in regards to providing rural children with access to better education. One of the priority issues of the plan is to address the challenge posed by the low school enrolment rate among rural children, especially girls, many of whom stay at home to work on family farms. Speaking at the meeting, Deputy Minister of Education and Sports Ms Sengdeuane Lachanthaboun said the ESWG has set a vision for education and sports development from now until 2030 and a detailed strategy until 2025 that will guide the improvement of education and sports. "We will focus on improving the quality of education for all subsectors to support social and economic development, increase competitiveness, ensure Laos is ready to benefit from

Asean integration, and ultimately improve livelihoods," she said. Ms Sengdeuane noted that the ministry and the ESWG will focus on compulsory primary education and extend it to lower secondary education to ensure everyone has access to education and can participate in the country's socio-economic development. The ESWG will also work to eradicate illiteracy among people of all ethnic groups and promote lifelong learning to improve their livelihoods. Another goal is to set education as the core of human resource development and place a greater emphasis on higher education and vocational training to respond to the demands of the labour market. The ESWG has enjoyed various achievements under the leadership of the ministry's steering committee and a wide range of support from development partners. Ms Sengdeuane said it was essential for education departments, districts, teachers, parents and village leaders around the country to work with local authorities to encourage children and illiterate people to attend school, especially in rural areas. "To achieve the ministry's target, we require all services and departments to work together to raise the standard of education throughout the country," she said. Yesterday's meeting was co-chaired by Ms Sengdeuane, Australian Ambassador to Laos Mr John Williams and Chargé d'Affaires of the European Union to Laos Mr Michel Goffin.

(Vientiane Times 04 Novembre 2015)

Laos drops import tariffs on cars to zero

(By Times Reporters)

Laos has abolished import tariffs on vehicles as part of measures to end trade barriers ahead of the establishment of the Asean Economic Community (AEC) at the end of this year, according to a foreign trade policy maker. Speaking in an exclusive interview with *Vientiane Times* earlier this week, Foreign Trade Policy Department Deputy Director General, Mr Saysana Sayakone said that Laos had begun to reduce import tariffs on goods since 2008 and now import tariffs on many goods have been reduced to zero. "Import tariffs on a large number of goods have been reduced to zero including cars," he said. "In the past, import tariffs on cars stood at 40 percent." Many countries regard import tariffs as a trade barrier, which they have to impose as part of efforts to protect domestic products. Many countries find it impossible to export their goods to countries which impose high tariffs on imported goods. In the case of Laos, this landlocked country considers tariffs as a major source of income. In the past, 11 percent of state income was sourced from import tariffs. Today, Laos imposes consumption taxes so that it can generate enough revenue to replace the lost income from the tariffs. The abolishment of the import tariff on cars is meant to ensure that car makers in Asean nations can export their vehicles to Laos without any tariff charges. Mr Saysana said that the price of cars in Laos was supposed to fall after the abolishment of the import tariff on vehicles as the car importers

will find the cost of importing vehicles to be less. However he believes that other conditions such as the high demand for cars and low business competition have caused the price of vehicles to be higher than in other countries. Car sales businesses have welcomed the government's decision to end the import tariff on vehicles. They also agreed with the government policy to impose a consumption tax on vehicles so that it can retain the same amount of national income. However they suggested that the government should collect the consumption tax after the sale of cars, adding that the government still collects the consumption tax at the border checkpoints, which is considered as an additional cost of business operation. Car importers have to pay consumption taxes to the government despite the fact they have not sold any cars to customers. They also said that the car importers sometimes had to borrow money from the banks to pay the taxes, which makes the price of the vehicles higher as the businesses have to pay the interest rates levied by the banks. Trade policy makers suggested that one of resolutions which car importers should adopt is to set up a good business plan so that they will be able to sell all of the imported cars as fast as possible so that they are not burdened by interest rate repayments. "If you import cars based on the orders of customers then you will not have to shoulder heavy responsibility to pay consumption taxes on cars," said one of the trade policy makers.

(*Vientiane Times* 04 November 2015)

US President to visit Laos next year

(By Times Reporters)

The White House has announced that President Barack Obama plans to attend the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) conference to be hosted by Laos next year, the US Embassy in Vientiane has confirmed. Mr Obama will become the first US president to visit Laos in more than a half-century, which will further enhance the relationship and cooperation between Laos and America. National Security aide Ben Rhodes said Obama will make history when he attends an Asean conference in the developing nation, according to a *Bangkok Post* report. The US president will travel to Malaysia later this month to participate in this year's Asean summit. He has made a point of attending as his administration seeks both to boost the group's standing and underscore the seriousness of an announced US "pivot" toward Asia and the Pacific, the *Bangkok Post* report stated. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, Laos and the US established diplomatic ties on August 10, 1955. From 1975-1989 each nation appointed Charge d'Affaires in the other's country. On November 12, 1990, the two countries upgraded their diplomatic relations

by appointing ambassadors. Since then, bilateral relations have continued to expand and both sides have attempted to promote and improve their relations in all areas. The two countries have exchanged visits by delegations from their governments and parliaments. These included the first official visit to the United States by Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Thongloun Sisoulith in 2010. In turn, the former US Foreign Secretary Ms Hillary Clinton paid her first official visit to Laos in July 2012. Laos and the United States have cooperated in several areas such as in the search for the remains of American servicemen who went missing in Laos during the Indochina War. The government of the United States has extended assistance to Laos in its efforts to combat drugs. This assistance has included creating conditions to eradicate opium poppy cultivation in Laos as well as supplying humanitarian aid. The US government has supported the construction of schools, hospitals and reservoirs along with providing medical and educational equipment, amongst others.

(Vientiane Times 06 Novembre 2015)

Laos- China railway nears kick off

(By Times Reporters)

Lao authorities have confirmed that a groundbreaking ceremony for the planned Laos-China Rail Project is set to take place soon in Vientiane. The national committee in charge of the US\$6.8 billion rail project met on Wednesday at the Government Office to discuss preparations for the event. The 417-km railway will link Vientiane with the Chinese border. The meeting agreed that Laos and China would hold the groundbreaking ceremony to also mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Lao People's Democratic Republic on December 2. The railway and the launch of Laos' first telecommunications satellite (Lao Sat-1) are two major projects Laos is pursuing to coincide with the nation's 40th anniversary. The Lao government and three Chinese developers announced last week the satellite would be launched into orbit on November 21. The meeting, chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and committee Chairman Mr Somsavat Lengsavad, discussed the work necessary to facilitate the construction of the railway, according to a press release from the Government Office. Participants discussed the supply of labour, equipment, technical experts and

food. They also discussed the management of the railway, compensation to those whose property was affected, necessary legislation, security and safety and other issues related to the commercial operation of the railway. The Lao and Chinese governments will be responsible for 40 percent of the total cost, while state enterprises of the two countries will jointly be responsible for sourcing the remaining 60 percent. Of its 40 percent share, the Lao government will be responsible for 30 percent amounting to US\$840 million, while China has agreed to provide a US\$500 million loan. The planned single track 1.435-metre standard-gauge railway will comprise 31 stations including five main stations and 76 tunnels measuring 195.78km. There will also be 154 bridges with a total length of 67.15km. A passenger train will travel at speeds up to 160km per hour, while a goods train will run at 120km per hour. The planned railway will form part of the regional rail link known as the Kunming-Singapore railway over a distance of 3,000km. The line will link China's Kunming all the way down to Singapore, passing through Laos, Thailand and Malaysia.

(Vientiane Times 06 Novembre 2015)