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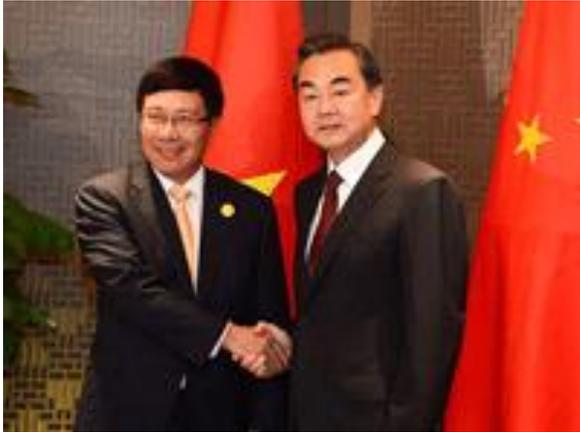
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China, Mekong countries launch Lancang-Mekong Cooperation framework

(By Souksakhone Vaenkeo)



KUNMING (China Daily/Xinhua) -- The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) framework was officially launched on Thursday following talks among senior foreign affairs officials from China, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam in Jinghong, Yunnan province. The Lancang-Mekong River is a natural link between the six countries. At the first LMC foreign ministers' meeting, they decided to cooperate in three key areas - politico-security issues, economic affairs and sustainable development, and social affairs and people-to-people

exchanges. At the invitation of Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Cambodian Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Hor Nam Hong, Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs ThonglounSisoulith, Myanmar Foreign Minister U WunnaMaungLwin, Thai Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai, Vietnamese Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh attended the meeting, and Wang Yi and Don Pramudwinai co-hosted the meeting. The LMC is the first sub-region cooperation by the six countries involved, and the cooperation framework is in accord with development demands, and the fundamental, long-term interests of the six countries, Wang said. The foreign affairs officials also expressed their willingness to have more frequent high-level visits, jointly deal with threat of traditional and non-traditional security issues, improve connectivity and industrial capacity cooperation, deepen cross-border economic cooperation, make proper use of natural resources and achieve sustainable development.

(Vientiane Times 14 Novembre2015)

Laos, China sign US\$6.28 billion railway deal

(By SouksakhoneVaenkeo)

The governments of Laos and China concluded an agreement on Friday in Beijing on the construction of a cross-border railway project linking the Lao capital of Vientiane with the Chinese border, *Xinhua* news agency reported on Friday. The 418 km railway is expected to start operating in 2020, *Xinhua* quoted Wang Xiaotao, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), China's top economic regulator, as saying. Major Chinese media outlets – including China Daily and Chinese Radio International (CRI) all carried the report about the signing of the deal. CRI carried the news with a picture showing Lao Deputy Prime Minister Somsavat Lengsavad signing the deal with Head of the NDRC Xu Shaoshi at a ceremony at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. The Lao National Committee in charge of the project, chaired by Mr Somsavat, told local media recently that a groundbreaking ceremony to start construction of the project was expected to begin soon, which will be on time to mark the 40th anniversary of the Lao PDR. The 40th anniversary falls on December 2. The two countries have agreed to use Chinese technology and equipment to develop the project that will connect Kunming, capital of southwestern China's Yunnan province, with the Lao capital of Vientiane, according to China Daily. The railway's average speed is set at 160 kph and some 60 percent of the line will be bridges and tunnels. China will be responsible for 70 percent of the US\$6.87 billion investment, while Laos will be responsible for the remainder. Officials were optimistic that the project will significantly boost socio-

economic development in Laos and China's Yunnan province. "The project will significantly boost the socioeconomic development of Laos, improve the nation's transportation and generate a lot of jobs for local people. Of course, it will also inject new momentum into the economy of China's southwestern regions," Wang Xiaotao, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission, was quoted by *China Daily* as telling Chinese reporters at the signing ceremony. The Lao government has engaged in talks with China for years in an attempt to realise the project, hoping to turn Laos from a landlocked country into a land-linked nation through railways and roads. The planned rail project will form the regional rail link known as the Kunming-Singapore rail line over a distance of 3,000 km. The regional rail line will link China's Kunming all the way down to Singapore, passing through Laos, Thailand and Malaysia. With only 3.5 km railway linking its capital with Thailand's Nong Khai province as it currently stands, the Lao government has also announced plans to develop an additional three major rail lines to link with its neighbours. They are the Vientiane-Thakhek-Muya rail project to link the Lao capital with the Vietnamese border over a distance of 450 km to access to Vung Ang seaport in Vietnam's Ha Tinh province, the Savan-Lao Bao rail project that will link the Lao central province of Savannakhet to the Lao-Vietnamese Dansavanh-Lao Bao border checkpoint, and a rail project to link the central province of Khammuan to Vangtao in Champassak that shares a border with Thailand.

(Vientiane Times 16 Novembre 2015)

Mekong countries, China launch new cooperation framework

(By Times Reporters)

Five Mekong countries and China officially launched the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation (LMC) framework last week following talks between senior officials from the six nations in Yunnan, China. The Lancang-Mekong River is a natural link between the six countries – Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and China.



Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Thongloun Sisoulith (second left) and his counterparts from Cambodia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam and China pose for a group photo before the 1st Lancang-Mekong Cooperation foreign ministers' meeting in China's Yunnan Province. --Photo Xinhua

At the first LMC foreign ministers' meeting, the ministers decided to cooperate in three key areas, those being political-security issues, economic affairs and sustainable development, as well as social affairs and people-to-people exchanges, Xinhua news agency reported last week. Lao Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Thongloun Sisoulith led a Lao delegation attending the meeting. The meeting was co-chaired by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Thai Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai, the Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a press release. The ministers dis-

cussed the potential for 'early harvest projects' within the three key areas, according to the press release. In this regard, the meeting discussed five prioritized fields for cooperation within the three key areas. The five fields are improving connectivity, capacity building for production cooperation, sustainable management for water resources, deepening cross-border economic development and poverty reduction cooperation. The ministers agreed to convene the LMC meetings at various levels comprising the LMC Summit, the LMC Foreign Ministers' Meeting, LMC Senior Officials' Meeting, and the LMC Technical Officials' Meeting. Last week's meeting also agreed to hold the first LMC Summit in China next year, according to the press release. Senior officials of the six countries have engaged in talks in order to prepare for this first LMC Foreign Ministers' Meeting. In April this year, senior officials of the respective countries met in Beijing, China before meeting again in August in Chiang Rai, Thailand. The LMC is the first sub-region cooperation platform by the six countries involved, and the framework is in accord with development demands, and the fundamental, long-term interests of the six countries, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi was quoted by Xinhua as saying. During the visit to China, Mr Thongloun and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi also held bilateral talks on ways to further enhance the bilateral ties and cooperation between the two countries and exchanged views on the future plan of cooperation.

(Vientiane Times 16 Novembre 2015)

Vientiane-Hanoi to conduct highway feasibility study

(By KhonesavanhLatsaphao)

Laos is preparing to undertake a feasibility study with Vietnam for a Vientiane-Hanoi highway project to bring the two capital cities closer to one another. Head of Office of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Dr Santisouk Simmalavong told *Vientiane Times* on Monday that the ministry has assembled several teams and is now getting ready for the survey. According to the news website *Saigon Times Online* last week, the Ministry of Transport of Vietnam had started a feasibility study on a 760-kilometre highway to connect Hanoi and Vientiane. The study conducted by Transport Engineering Design Inc., will help decide whether the route should pass through Nghe An or Ha Tinh, the two central provinces that border Laos. Meanwhile, Lao officials have yet to decide on any preferred route. "Right now we don't yet know whether to improve existing roads in the two countries or construct a completely new road for the Vientiane-Hanoi highway project," Dr Santisouk said. A feasibility study should also answer important questions such as: will construction be financed by Vietnam, or will Laos pay for its section and Vietnam take care of its side of the border? Currently, many motorists travel-

ling from Vientiane to Hanoi use the road through Namphao-Cau Treo international border between Laos and Vietnam in Borikhamxay province. Laos' feasibility study may investigate this option. Dr Santisouk added that the two governments of Laos and Vietnam were conducting a feasibility study on the Vientiane-Hanoi highway project in a bid to make the road link shorter and more comfortable. The news website *Saigon Times Online* reported that the Ministry of Transport would meet with its Lao counterpart this month to work on the project, which will help improve transport within the region. The highway is one of three transport projects that the Vietnamese and Lao governments are working on. Last month the Ministry of Transport of Vietnam announced its plan to work with Korea International Cooperation Agency to study the feasibility of a 550-kilometre railway between Ha Tinh's Vung Ang Port and Vientiane. Furthermore, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam are also looking to build a passenger bus service that connects Ha Tinh, Khammuan province in the central region of Laos to Nakhon Phanom province of Thailand.

(*Vientiane Times* 17 Novembre 2015)

Govt to encourage farmers to feed railway project

(By Times Reporters)

The government is preparing to plan a detailed policy for farmers to produce food to supply the Lao-Chinese railway project, which is slated to commence in December. Rice products and livestock for food security and commercial sale is one of the preparation projects for the railway project, Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Dr Phouangparisak Pravongviengkham told local media in Vientiane recently. The government, especially the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, has allocated nine target provinces and the capital Vientiane to produce rice and livestock for food security. Each year, the ministry set the target at 2.5 million tonnes of rice for food security in the provinces of Bokeo, Luang Namtha, Xayaboury, Vientiane, Borikhamxay, Khammuan, Savannakhet, Saravan and Champassak as well as the capital, he reported. However, these target areas are able to produce around 3.2 million tonnes of rice or 85 percent of the country's rice production, of which 1.1 million tonnes are surplus to sell on the domestic market while some is for export along the borders, Dr Phouangparisak said. To ensure rice production in these target areas, the ministry said it is necessary to expand the irrigation system for irrigated agriculture as well as drought and flood prevention. To operate the projects, the ministry will join with the target provinces to create the irrigation improvement and development projects plan from 2020 and 2025, he explained. The main issue that the ministry

should urgently concentrate on in the ten target provinces is allocation or dividing rice product areas for foodstuffs and the management of cultivation land for rice product, focused on irrigation areas. To promote the project's operation and success, it shall require a sufficient budget for implementation, officials said. The ministry is also focusing on livestock and fish promotion as well as other crops for the domestic market and for export, said Dr Phouangparisak. Laos has potential in raising livestock for the domestic market and export, especially buffaloes and cattle, so the livestock project also requires large areas for promotion. As the ministry has received some funding from the domestic budget and foreign grants as well as income from domestic and foreign investment projects, some specific land cultivation allocation projects for plants, livestock and fish are now underway. The land cultivation allocation project in Vientiane is a model, while livestock and fish projects are focusing on provinces such as Xiengkhuang, Bokeo, Luang Namtha, Huaphan, Xayaboury, Xaysomboun, Savannakhet and Saravan. Livestock breeding and fish should shift from family businesses to a farming system, which should be expanded to reach 55 percent by 2020 and 70 percent by 2025, up from 30 percent at present. To achieve the project's targets for food security and commercial cultivation, it will require cooperation from various government sectors and also private businesses.

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Laos, China railway groundbreaking set for December 2

(By SouksakhoneVaenkeo)

A groundbreaking ceremony to begin the construction of a high-profile rail project linking Vientiane with the Chinese border is scheduled to take place on December 2 – the day the Lao People's Democratic Republic marks its 40th anniversary. The governments of Laos and China signed an agreement on November 13 in Beijing on the construction of the 40 billion yuan (US\$6.28 billion) railway project. “The signing of the agreement means the project has now begun,” Deputy Minister of Public Works and Transport Lattanamongkhounvong told at a press conference on Monday in Vientiane. A Chinese delegation has arrived in Vientiane to work with the Lao side preparing for the groundbreaking ceremony to be held in Vientiane. A Laos-China joint company was established early this month to develop the 418 km railway. Construction of the project is expected to take about four and a half years to complete, the deputy minister said. China will be responsible for 70 percent of the total investment, while Laos will be responsible for the remainder. With Laos seeking loan from China to supplement its 30 percent financial obligation for the project, MrLattanamongkhounvong stated that Beijing pledged to provide a lower interest rate than previously offered. It was reported previously that China agreed to provide a loan of about US\$500 million with an annual interest rate of three percent over a 20-year term. “The interest rate should be lower than three percent,” MrLattanamongkhounvong told local media. The

deputy minister dismissed rumours which previously suggested that kilometres of land along both sides of the rail line will be preserved for the mega project. He confirmed that only 50 metres along each side of the rail line will be preserved for safety reasons. “It is an international standard to preserve this scale of land for safety reasons with regard to rail operations,” he said. The rail's maximum speeds are set at 160 km per hour and 120 km per hour when carrying passengers and goods respectively. Of the total length, some 60 percent of the line will be bridges and tunnels. MrLattanamongkhounvong assured that local businesses will be given the opportunities to be involved in the project construction, urging them to be prepared. The Chinese delegation led by Lao-Sino Railway Project Joint Preparatory Team Leader Zhao Xiang called on Deputy Prime Minister Somsavat Lengsavad, who is in charge of the project for Laos. Both sides discussed preparations for the groundbreaking ceremony and the future work plan. Mr Zhao Xiang pledged that his team will do its utmost to work with the Lao side for the groundbreaking and implementation of the project. The planned rail project will form part of the regional rail link known as the Kunming-Singapore rail line over a distance of 3,000km. The rail line will link China's Kunming all the way down to Singapore, passing through Laos, Thailand and Malaysia.

(Vientiane Times 18 Novembre 2015)

Trade for socio-economic development

(By Times Reporters)

The Board of the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) yesterday opened its 21st session in Vientiane for trade promotion to contribute to socio-economic development and poverty reduction.



MrSomchithInthamith(third right) gives remarks at the meeting in Vientiane.

The Board is the highest decision-making body of the EIF and is made up by representatives of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), donors and partner agencies, the three main constituencies of the EIF partnership. The EIF has provided technical and financial support to the development and implementation of the country's trade development since 2004, Deputy Minister of Industry and Commerce, MrSomchithInthamith said at the opening of the meeting. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce will continue to fully support the key objectives defined in the EIF phase II framework, which calls for a changed approach to the management of the programme to reflect the growing experience and capacity of LDCs, he said. "We also welcome the expanded scope of the priorities for future Tier II projects and other initiatives to strengthen country ownership and leadership of the programme," MrSomchith added. This is an extremely important session of the EIF Board, said Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone to the United Nations and the WTO in Geneva, Chair of the EIF Board, Ms Yvette Stevens. It's the last session of the current phase of the EIF and as such fundamental decisions will be

taken for the successful implementation of phase II due to start on January 1, 2016, she said. These include the appointment of the Trust Fund Manager for Phase II as well as the approval of the mandates and functions for the EIF Governance of the Change Management Plan of the revised log frame and risk management matrix and of the new sustainability guideline, Ms Stevens explained. The Board will also discuss the new efficiency gains plan, the EIF communications strategy, the value for money approach, and the format of the new compendium of EIF documents for phase II of the EIF from 2016-2022. Since 2014, the EIF Board meets three times a year, and it has decided to hold two of its sessions in an LDC. Laos is the second country to host an EIF Board after Gambia. "We are grateful to the authorities of Laos for hosting a session of the EIF Board in their country," said Secretariat Executive, MrRatnakarAdhikari. Since the beginning, Laos has fully seized the coordination and resource leveraging opportunities provided by the EIF and the implementation of the programme in the country is a shining example of the EIF core values, partnership approach, country ownership and results for sustainable development, he added. The programme for the EIF Board Members also includes field visits to ISO certified laboratories and facilities at the Department of Standards and Metrology and to the Garment Skills Development Centre, both supported through the EIF as well as a meeting with national EIF partners, including the private sector, to share experiences on leveraging EIF support to develop and implement a national Trade and Private Sector Roadmap. The EIF is the only Aid-for-Trade Partnership exclusively dedicated to support LDCs to use trade as a vehicle for economic growth and poverty reduction. The programme is currently supported by 23 donors

and works in 51 of the poorest countries in

the world.

(Vientiane Times 19 Novembre2015)

Laos ready to launch its first satellite

(By SomsackPongkhao)

Laos is set to launch its first telecommunications satellite (Lao Sat-1) into the 128.5 degrees East orbital slot on November 21, which has been specifically allocated to Laos.



MrHiemPhommachanh.

The US\$259 million project will be launched from China but the control system will be in Laos after the launch, Minister of Posts and Telecommunications MrHiem-Phommachanh confirmed at a press conference in Vientiane yesterday. A high-level Lao delegation is preparing to leave for China for the launch of the project, which is considered a landmark in Lao history, aiming to spur many facets of development and industry. “Everything is now ready for the launch,” MrHiem said. “The Lao Sat-1 will be very beneficial for our country because our country's terrain includes a lot of mountains. Our satellite can be used for many purposes, including education, health, defence, security, internet, television and so on.” He explained that there are two orbital slots specifically allocated to Laos, including 128.5 degrees East and 126 degrees East. Under the ‘use it or lose it’ principle, Laos must abide by this guideline within the specific timeframe. “Actually the timeframe for 128.5 degrees East orbital slot has already

finished in May 2015, but we have gone to Geneva to negotiate and got it back,” MrHiem said, saying that the timeframe for the 126 degrees East orbital slot will finish in a seven year period. Despite the fact achievements have been made on this project, MrHiem was still concerned about how to recoup the investment capital as the planned satellite will last for 15 years. In an era of economic competitiveness, it was always a challenge for Laos to earn money from this business to launch the new one to replace it after 15 years. However MrHiem 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. The minister said the Lao Sat-1 will be placed in the slot which covers 15 countries, which means Laos can sell some of its transmission space to other countries because demand in Laos is still small. MrHiem described the achievements and challenges since the start of the project. Work on the satellite project began in 2006 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. “Our main challenges are finance and human resources. We have sent 50 people to train overseas for this project,” he said. A shareholders' agreement for the Lao Sat-1 Joint Venture Company was signed in Vientiane on October 30 between the Lao government and the three Chinese developers. The 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.

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Paediatricians meet to update care techniques

(By PhetphoxaySengpaseuth)

Paediatrics experts from eight targeted provinces nationwide are meeting in Vientiane to discuss improvements to procedures and preventative care to help newborns get a safer start into life. The participating paediatricians come from Vientiane and the provinces of Savannakhet, Champassack, Xiengkhuang, LuangNamtha, Huaphanh, LuangPrabang and Vientiane. These targeted provinces have high death rates amongst newborn infants because many doctors still lack understanding and could be providing better health services to infants, officials confirmed. President of the Lao Paediatrics Association and Director General of Setthathirath Hospital, Associate Professor DrKhampePhongsavath told participants at the opening of the workshop entitled “Clinical newborn care - essentials and improvements” on Monday that the overall goal is to contribute to reducing neonatal morbidity and the infant mortality rate. Participants listed their reports on their experiences providing neo-natal services and helping with the delivery of newborns during the workshop, which is being held at the Mother and Newborn Hospital in Vientiane. “This hos-

pital has experience in relation to maternity services and helping newborns to a safer start into life, greater than that of other hospitals in Laos,” he said. During the meeting, participants offered their opinions on what improvements are needed and what needs to be done in order to provide better specialised care at neonatal intensive care units, he said. During the workshop, topics of major importance in newborn care will be presented by doctors and nurses of both organisations. They are set to include nutrition, respiratory support, oxygen therapy, circulation, neonatal infections and temperature regulation. According to the Lao Social Indicator Survey in 2012, the death rate for birthing mothers was 357 out of every 100,000 births. The death rate for children under one year of age was 68 out of every 1,000 live births, and for children under five it was 79 out of every 1,000 live births. According to the National Centre for Maternal and Child Health, the official (international) database showed the 2013 maternal mortality rate for Laos to be 220 deaths per 100,000 live births, while the figure for 2015 is as yet undeclared.

(Vientiane Times 19 Novembre2015)

United States and Laos partner to improve global health

(By Times Reporters)

President Barack Obama has announced that the United States and 30 countries including Laos have made a commitment to work together to achieve the targets of the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA). His announcement was made on November 16 during the G-20 Leaders' Summit in Antalya, Turkey. The United States will partner with Laos to develop the capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to future disease outbreaks, according to a source from the US Embassy in Vientiane. The source said infectious disease outbreaks, whether natural, intentional, or accidental, are still among the foremost dangers to human health and the global economy. With patterns of global travel and trade, disease can spread nearly anywhere within 24 hours. To help advance the Global Health Security Agenda objectives, the US Government will work with the government of Laos and other stakeholders to build five-year country roadmaps. These roadmaps are intended to identify specific milestones, next steps, and gaps toward achieving the capacity needed to prevent, detect, and respond to biological threats and help facilitate better understanding across sectors and among implementing partners. "The spread of infectious diseases pose a global threat and presents serious public health, economic and development concerns. The United States welcomes this opportunity to collaborate with the government of Laos

to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to infectious disease threats," said Ambassador to the Lao PDR Daniel A. Clune. In July 2015, the US government announced its intent to invest more than US\$1 billion in resources to expand the GHSA to prevent, detect, and respond to future infectious disease outbreaks in 17 countries. On November 16, the United States announced an additional 13 countries including Laos, which are working to achieve the GHSA targets. The 30 partner countries of the United States will include five Asean member countries including Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia and Thailand. Working closely with these partners and countries around the world, the US will strive to achieve a world safe and secure from infectious disease threats by building measurable, sustainable capacity to prevent, detect and rapidly respond to infectious disease threats, whether naturally occurring, accidental or deliberately spread, according to the Office of the Press Secretary of the White House. The US called on all countries to make additional commitments to save lives by preventing future outbreaks from becoming epidemics. The GHSA invests in needed capacity - infrastructure, equipment, and skilled personnel across sectors - and enhances coordination and commitment for countries, international organisations and civil society to work together to achieve targets.

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Asean sustainable agrifood to ensure food security

(By Times Reporters)

The Lao government is focusing on the promotion of sustainable agricultural systems for food security in Asean when the country integrates with the Asean Economic Community (AEC) at the end of this year. The Agriculture Department of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, in cooperation with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH is hosting the 6th project partner meeting of the German Regional Cooperation project's Asean sustainable agrifood systems (Asean SAS) initiative, which is being implemented by GIZ. The meeting series in Vientiane stretched over four days and provided a platform for the partners from Asean member states and the private sector to discuss challenges and lay out work plans and strategies for the coming years. This collective effort will strengthen the implementation of the new vision and strategic plan for Asean cooperation in food, agriculture and forestry for 2016-2025 and reinforce the Asean community building post 2015. Food security in Asean requires national sustainable agrifood systems that sustain the livelihoods and the competitiveness of agriculture and supply sufficient staple foods throughout the region. The Asean SAS project supports the development of regionally-coordinated policies, strategies and dialogue concepts for a sustainable agrifood sector and promotes sustainable inputs and crop management practices through capacity development. The project is part of the Asean-German programme on responses to climate change in agriculture and forestry (GAP-CC) and is now in its second phase until 2017. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry's Planning and Cooperation Department Director General, Mr Xaypladeth Choulamany, who is

also leader of the senior official's meeting of Asean Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry for Laos, highlighted the commitments yesterday and efforts of all Asean member states and the support from development partners and international organisations to the Asean Community. He reiterated the commitments of Asean Member States made at the 37th Meeting of the Asean Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry held in September in the Philippines to continue the cooperation and deepen regional integration beyond 2015 to improve Asean's agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors and to achieve regional sustainable food security and nutrition. Project Director of Asean SAS Dr Matthias Bickel said that underscored Germany's efforts to strengthen food and nutrition security through the promotion of sustainable agrifood systems at the national and regional levels under the Asean Integration Food Security (AIFS) Framework. He highlighted the achievements made through the productive collaboration in the Asean region to address sustainable food production in three intervention areas, policy frameworks, production technologies and market linkages. Dr Matthias underlined the importance of regional and global cooperation, particularly through engaging civil society, private sector and research institutions and emphasised that collaboration with the private sector is a key factor to achieving food and nutrition security. He concluded that the meeting was another important milestone for the Asean SAS to discuss the challenges and develop strategies for project activities beyond 2015 to accommodate emerging challenges to food security including environment and climate change for securing sustainable food production in the Asean region.

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WB to improve poverty targeting in Laos

(By KhonesavanhLatsaphao)

Officials from the National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Reduction Fund, the Lao Statistics Bureau, and the World Bank (WB) gathered in Vientiane for a consultation meeting on national poverty targeting in Laos. An official from the committee, who requested anonymity, told *Vientiane Times* that the WB assisted the country's efforts in poverty targeting. "This meeting discussed how progress could be made in evaluating poverty so that the outcomes of our agencies don't differ," he said. Previously, the National Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Reduction Fund and the Lao Statistics Bureau published reports with different conclusions. According to a report from June this year on the inspection and assessment of standards of poverty reduction and development from 2011 to 2015, figures pertaining to poverty and development for that period show the number of poor districts has dropped from 53 to 23 at present. The figures also showed a reduction in the number of poor villages, with 3,175 classified as poor in 2011 while today the number stands at 1,736 villages. The number of poor fami-

lies has also fallen, from 198,600 to 76,600 families this year. The state and Party initiated a pilot programme on the Three Builds directive in 109 villages in 51 districts at the end of 2012. This was part of the Three Builds directive on the building of provinces as strategic units, districts as comprehensively strengthened units, and villages as development units. Provincial authorities will provide examples of Three Builds successes for inclusion in a nationwide summary of related achievements in November this year. According to the National Leading Committee for Rural Development and Poverty Eradication, prior to 2010 poor road access was a limiting factor in village development. Some villages had small roads and these were not passable the whole year round. Director General of the Department of Social Statistics, MsPhonesalySouksavath, said the population of Laos will certainly continue to increase. The results of the fourth Lao Population and Housing Census carried out across the country from March 1-7 this year, will be reported soon.

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