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Historic artefact display soon to open at city pillar

(By Times Reporters)

A newly built exhibition hall at the Vientiane City Pillar was handed over to the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism yesterday as a valuable addition to this iconic landmark.



Director General of the ministry's Heritage Department, DrBounthiengSiliphaphan(third left), and the constructor hand over a symbolic key to the exhibition hall at the Vientiane City Pillar.

The exhibition space displays a collection of important materials relating to the city pillar so that researchers, students and local and foreign visitors can learn about the history, culture and lifestyle of people in days gone by. Construction of the exhibition hall began in February 2013, undertaken by the Phetthapab Road-Bridge Construction Company at a cost of more than 7.3 billion kip. The new building was handed over to the Direc-

tor General of the ministry's Heritage Department, DrBounthiengSiliphaphan, by the constructor. Speaking at the handover ceremony, Former Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism and President of the Vientiane City Pillar project, MrMounkeoOraboun, said the new addition to the city pillar pavilion would serve as an important store of historical information and ancient artefacts that had been dug up around Vientiane. He expressed his appreciation of the exhibition hall and advised the authorities to set up a management committee to keep the exhibition in good order. To emphasise the importance of the Vientiane City Pillar, authorities and local communities should hold a special ceremony there during Pi Mai Lao each year and during other major events such as the That Luang Festival, he suggested. Former Prime Minister and Vientiane City Pillar project Honorary President MrBouasone Bouphavanh and Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism Prof. DrBosengkham-Vongdara and other officials also attended the ceremony.

(Vientiane Times 27February 2016)

Health workers stress benefits of nutrition for child development

(By Times Reporters)

Large numbers of Lao women are still poorly informed about foetal development and requirements for the healthy growth of infants and young children. The University of Health Sciences, in cooperation with the Early Life Nutrition Network of Thailand, yesterday hosted a lecture on early life nutrition in a bid to promote good health in pregnancy, infancy and young childhood and prevent malnutrition and excessive weight. The seminar was chaired by the university's Director, Assoc. Prof. DrSomchith-Boupha, with lecturers from Laos and Thailand and addressing officials and medical workers

from the Ministry of Health. The lecture served to boost the capacity of Lao health staff in the field to implement policies in the right way and help to reduce child mortality rates. It also served as a platform for discussions about nutrition between Lao and Thai doctors and to facilitate cooperation and planning on nutrition. Participants learnt more about healthy foetal development as well as the causes of poor health among infants. As many people are aware, the incidence of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is on the increase in Laos, according to the Ministry of Health although most

people don't yet understand how these diseases develop. However, studies by scientific experts around the world have confirmed that NCDs can arise in each foetal trimester during pregnancy. Studies have shown that foetal growth is impaired when mothers are malnourished and that children with a birth weight of less than 2.5kg or over 4kg can be at risk of NCDs as they grow older. One study on the development origins of health and disease confirmed that newborns, infants and children aged between 2-5 years old are also at risk of developing NCDs in the future despite being born in good health. Healthy pre-natal and post-natal growth will be impaired if children are malnourished as a good diet is a precondition to healthy growth and development. However, by the same token, mothers and caregivers should also take care

not to overfeed their children. Children aged two years and under should continue to be breastfed while babies aged six months or less should be fed exclusively on breast milk. After six months, other foods can be progressively introduced but these should be nutrient rich and wholesome foods and not exclusively rice. According to the World Health Organisation, malnutrition, which results in slow growth, is a serious issue in Indonesia and Vietnam, where short or stunted children represent about 30 percent of the infant and youth population. By comparison, rates in China, Thailand and Malaysia come in at around 10-20 percent, which highlights the situation facing Indonesia and Vietnam, as well as Laos for which comparable statistics were unavailable.

(Vientiane Times 27 February 2016)

Laos, Australia and EU join forces to improve education outcomes

(By Times Reporters)

It is estimated that 450,000 Lao girls and boys will achieve literacy, numeracy and other life skills through the Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos (BEQUAL) programme. The BEQUAL programme is managed by Australia and the Ministry of Education and Sports, with additional funding provided by the European Union (EU). The programme is designed to be rolled out over 10 years, in three phases. The first phase runs from 2015-2019 and will focus on 66 of the most educationally disadvantaged districts in Laos. This information was revealed during the first Steering Committee meeting of the BEQUAL programme held in Vientiane on Friday, which aimed to endorse a range of initiatives to improve education outcomes for children across Laos, according to the Australian Embassy. The meeting was co-chaired by Deputy Minister of Education and Sports Ms Sengdeuane Lachanthaboun, Australian Ambassador to Laos Mr John Williams and EU's Acting Chargé d'Affaires

to Laos Mr Bryan Fornari. Targeting the most educationally disadvantaged districts, the programme will strengthen the quality of teacher training, improve school infrastructure, provide learning materials, and increase participation by the most disadvantaged children – girls, children from remote areas, and students with disabilities. The meeting reflected on the significant progress achieved during the programme's first eight months, including the provision of 217 scholarships to ethnic teacher trainees and commencing renewal of the national primary curriculum. The meeting also endorsed the priorities and outcomes for BEQUAL over the next four years. Ms Sengdeuane said the ministry has worked closely with the Australian government and European Union for many years, including as joint co-chairs of the Education Sector Working Group. "This is a large-scale, long-term programme that will help disadvantaged students to get a better education,"

she said. Ambassador Williams said that education was at the very heart of Australia's aid programme in Laos. He said that building on Australia's longstanding investments, BEQUAL was supporting the ministry's core business, working directly with the ministry at the central, provincial and district levels. "Through BEQUAL, Australia is working side by side with the ministry to develop the curriculum, teachers and schools needed to ensure that children go to school, stay in primary school, and learn while they are there," he said. Mr Fornari highlighted the partnership between the EU, the ministry and Australia as a good example of effective donor coordination in action. He said BE-

QUAL was a comprehensive programme that included a wide range of strategies and actions that would help to improve the quality of basic education and address multiple education challenges. "The European Union is pleased to partner with the governments of Australia and Laos to help more Lao children access a quality education," Mr Fornari said. Among the 70 participants were senior representatives from provincial governor offices, provincial education offices, senior managers of education ministry departments and teacher training colleges, BEQUAL technical advisers, development partners, and invited guests.

(Vientiane Times 29 February 2016)

Passenger screening at Wattay airport to prevent spread of disease

(By Times Reporters)

The ministries of Health and Public Works and Transport will team up to screen passengers arriving and departing from Wattay International Airport as part of enhanced monitoring for communicable diseases.



Dr Bounlay Phommasack (*right*) shakes hands with Mr Vanhpheng Chanthaphone at the signing ceremony.

The plan to screen passengers on entry and exit at the airport will be initiated in the near future after the two ministries agreed to cooperate on communicable disease control. The screenings are part of a layered process that includes exit screening and standard public health practices such as patient isolation and contact tracing in countries with disease outbreaks. A document related to the agreement was signed in Vientiane on Friday by the Director General of the Ministry of Health's

Department of Communicable Diseases Control, Dr Bounlay Phommasack, and Director General of the Ministry of Public Works and Transport's Department of Civil Aviation, Mr Vanhpheng Chanthaphone. "We work to continuously increase the safety of Lao people," said Dr Bounlay. "We believe these new measures will further protect people's health and we realise that nothing we can do will get us to absolute zero risk until we end these communicable diseases." The Ministry of Health is particularly concerned about SARS, bird flu, Ebola, MERS, the Zika virus and others. Last year, the ministry took steps to combat Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) after the virus killed two people and infected 30 others in the Republic of Korea. Dr Bounlay said that although Laos was at low risk of infection, according to the World Health Organisation, equipment and personnel have been prepared to tackle the virus should it occur here. This has been done because people who have passed through countries where communicable infections have been identified are coming to Laos. Also last year, scanning machines for

MERS were installed at international arrival hubs such as Wattay International Airport. "These preventive measures will do the same thing as was done to combat SARS, bird flu, Ebola and other communicable diseases," Dr Bounlay said. Under the new agreement, staff working at border crossings will be given information about communicable diseases and their prevention. The personal details of people arriving from outbreak countries will be recorded by immigration staff. They will also be monitored for symptoms such as fever, cough and shortness of breath. "Staff from the Department of

Communicable Diseases Control and the Department of Civil Aviation will continue to observe all travellers for general overt signs of illnesses at all Lao ports of entry. These expanded screening measures will provide an additional layer of protection to help ensure the risk of communicable diseases in other countries is minimised," Mr Vanhpheng said. "The departments, working closely with the health sector, will continue to assess the risk of the spread of communicable diseases into the country and take additional measures as necessary to protect the Lao people," he added.

(Vientiane Times 01 March 2016)

Workshop tackles hydropower issues

(By Times Reporters)

The US Department of State in collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Mines last week organised a workshop to enhance the skills of staff in dealing with public involvement and conflict resolution in hydropower projects. The three-day workshop which ended last Wednesday was attended by staff from the Ministry of Energy and Mines, EDL-Generation Public Company (EDL-Gen) and Electricite du Laos (EDL) along with reporters from *Vientiane Times* and *Paxaxon* newspapers, Lao News Agency (KPL), Lao National Television (LNT), and Lao National Radio (LNR). The workshop helped staff from the ministry, EDL and media to better understand public involvement and conflict solution in Lao hydropower projects. Besides this, participants learned about the challenges, opportunities and disputes associated with public involvement in recent hydropower projects. Specifically, the workshop aimed to build shared understanding of context, trajectory, risk and opportunity in the planning, design, and operations of hydropower projects to collaborate, work with conflict

situations, and identify structures for cooperative engagement. In addition, it aimed to identify case studies for applying skills and techniques in public participation, collaboration, and conflict transformation, and to adapt international best practices to the local context and determine relevant points to incorporate strategies, analysis and platforms. This was the first capacity building workshop regarding participation, collaboration and conflict transformation in Laos with experts from the US Army Corps of Engineers invited to be trainers, said Director General of the Energy Policy and Planning Department, Dr Daovong Phonekeo. "The ministry will hold this kind of workshop again in the future to enhance the capacity of our staff," he added. Dr Daovong said the US had a great deal of experience in hydropower development so Laos could learn from them. Participants also learned about case studies on US hydropower, working with conflict and improving public engagement in the Columbia River, and using the public involvement spectrum to increase engagement in the Missouri River.

(Vientiane Times 01 March 2016)

Sustainable jobs sought for former opium poppy growers

(By KhonesavanhLatsaphao)

Many families who once grew opium poppies in Huaphan province will now have answers as to how to earn a living after giving up the crop thanks to an alternative development project. An official from the provincial Drug Control Office, who asked not to be named, told *Vientiane Times* on Monday that after a meeting this week drug control officials will ask former opium growers and users what livelihood options they would like to pursue. "We will then try to draw up plans to provide assistance for them after we have collected information," he said. The alternative development project has received grant aid from the United States and Luxembourg, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision. Some US\$3 million (over 24 billion kip) will be invested in alternative development projects in Huaphan province, which are set to run until 2018. They are expected to benefit 2,000 families in areas that used to grow opium poppies, which are concentrated in 38 villages in the four districts of Xamneua, Xamtay, Kuan and Xone. The official explained that the main alternative development projects will involve planting crops, raising animals, weaving skirts, building village funds and helping addicts to detoxify. Many families who used to grow opium poppies wanted to engage in alterna-

tive occupations but lacked the necessary funding to diversify. The Associated Press reported last week that Myanmar is currently the second-biggest opium producer after Afghanistan. With support and cooperation from the international community and friendly countries, the Lao government was able to significantly eliminate opium poppy cultivation in 2008. But today many former growers have returned to their old ways, because they lack the necessary capital to branch out into alternative occupations. Last year, more than 30kg of amphetamine tablets, 41.4kg of dried cannabis, 10kg of amphetamine derivatives (ice), and 3kg of heroin were set ablaze in Vientiane in June to demonstrate the authorities' stance against drugs on the 28th International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. In 2014, the amount of illicit drugs seized in Vientiane and the provinces destined for incineration included over 3.8 million amphetamine tablets, 238.5kg of heroin, 47.8kg of raw opium, 1,480kg of dried cannabis, 83.5kg of morphine and 22.3kg of ya ice (crystal methamphetamine). In 2013, the drug in cineration included 5.2 million amphetamine tablets, 2,212kg of dried cannabis, 307kg of crystal methamphetamine, 18kg of compressed heroin, 1.4kg of heroin powder, and 3.2kg of a substance resembling heroin.

(*Vientiane Times* 01 March 2016)

Tourist operators urged to accommodate growing number of visitors

(By Times Reporters)

The Lao Association of Travel Agencies (LATA) is encouraging northern tourism operators to expand their accommodation and other facilities to meet the increasing demand from foreign self-drive tourists.



Chinese tourists are descending on Laos in large numbers. (File photo)

The call to improve conditions, including Chinese language ability, was made after more than 9,000 Chinese tourists arrived in Luang Prabang in private vehicles for the recent Lunar New Year celebrations. In an interview with *Vientiane Times* yesterday, LATA President Mr Somphong Dayviengxay said more facilities were needed in the eight northern provinces to cope with the growing influx of the self-drive visitor market. For example, he said that sometimes there weren't enough guides, accommodation or parking for Chinese visitors in World Heritage listed Luang Prabang, especially during peak times such as the recent New Year celebrations. Chinese people like to visit natural and cultural tourist sites, such as waterfalls and old temples. Last year most visitors to the northern town came from Thailand, with Chinese nationals ranking second. Thai and Chinese citizens have been coming to Lu-

ang Prabang in large numbers for several years, according to the provincial tourist office. Over 400,000 tourists of all nationalities came to the province last year and local authorities hope to boost the number to 700,000 by 2020. Mr Somphong said the growing number of Chinese visiting Luang Prabang province may constitute the largest number of all nationalities coming to the World Heritage Site in the near future. "When a very large group arrives, communication with staff in guesthouses, hotels and restaurants can be somewhat troublesome because the Chinese cannot speak English," he said. Laos is now conveniently connected to many cities by air and land transport which makes it easy for people to visit the country. It is predicted that the number of foreign visitors will reach 4.6 million by 2016, so transport authorities and tourism bodies need to make sure the transport options available to visitors are safe. There were 4.3 million international tourist arrivals last year, up 4.88 percent from 4.1 million in 2014. The trips generated US\$670 million in revenue, according to a recent report from the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism. Laos has become a top destination for international visitors due to its intriguing tourist attractions including natural and cultural sites as well as other sightseeing highlights. According to the ministry's Tourism Development Department, there are now over 1,490 officially listed tourist sites in Laos, but some of them require further development to cater to visitors.

(*Vientiane Times* 02 March 2016)

Cultural treasures discovered in Bokeo

(By Times Reporters)

Buddha images estimated to be 600 to 1,000 years old and believed to date back to the Khom period have been found by the Mekong River in Homyen village, Tonpheung district, Bokeo province. District officials and other authorities have been examining the artefacts since they first came to light on February 19. As of yesterday, officials had located 18 Buddha statuettes ranging in size from 5cm to 10cm and other bronze Buddha images measuring 8cm to 17cm, as well as other items of cultural interest, according to the district information, culture and tourism office. In an interview with *Vientiane Times* yesterday, Office Head Ms Sikeo-Mingboupha said the items are being kept safe in a local temple. District authorities say their final resting place will be the provincial museum. "The discovery of this site will be included in the provincial authorities' plan to develop the area as a place of natural and cultural interest for visitors," she said. Ms Sikeo said the section's officials will work with central authorities and other agencies to see if further discoveries are made. They will continue to examine the existing artefacts and identify other potential items of interest in the same area. The artefacts were found in an area formerly known as Souvannakhomkham, an

archaeological site on the banks of the Mekong, just across from Chieng Saen province in Thailand. The area referred to by the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism as Souvannakhomkham or Muang Souvannakhomkham is located in the south of Tonpheung district. The area, measuring about 35 hectares, is enclosed by the Mekong. It forms a U-shaped bend at Souvannakhomkham on the west, south and east and extends north up to the road between Simuangngam and Tonpheung villages. Surveys undertaken by the Ministry and provincial Department of Information, Culture and Tourism on the site since 1994 have identified more than 40 sites with the remains of Buddhist structures, primarily along the eastern and southern banks of the Mekong. The river is about 500 metres away but it is assumed, based on the presence of a steep slope along the southern boundary of the site, that the course of the river in the past was much nearer. On top of a hill that forms the north-western corner of the site, the remains of a temple were found. Although the remains of Buddhist monasteries were found inside a walled area, there does not seem to be any correlation between the walled site and the location of the temples, which may suggest they are from different periods.

(Vientiane Times 02 March 2016)

Govt, UN review development progress

(By Times Reporters)

The Lao government is keen to cooperate with its development partners to fulfil the priorities of the 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan for 2016-20 in view of its implications for graduation from Least Developed Country status. To ensure that the government achieves its development goals, the Ministry of Planning and Investment and the United Nations jointly

briefed journalists on the implementation of the outcomes of the country's main development forum of the 12th High Level Round Table Meeting over the past three months. During the media conference, Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Dr Kikeo Chanthaboury highlighted the key policy areas. These are clustered around macro-micro economics and inclusive growth,

social and human development, environmental sustainability, and a range of cross-cutting areas like governance, civil society, illicit drugs and UXO. "To implement the 12th High Level Round Table Meeting, the government has assigned responsibilities to each relevant ministry to work with its development partners. The UNDP is also in charge of coordinating with its international development partners," he said. Dr Kikeo said there are 10 sectorial working groups which are assigned to ensure more effective results in the implementation of each development priority of the government's plans. "The priority areas to support the development of Laos centre on increased investment in various areas of health and education as well as enhancing rural infrastructure and modernising agriculture," he said. He added that food and nutrition security and access to quality education and health are also key priorities for graduation from Least Developed Country status in 2020. Dr Kikeo also noted that each year a meeting is held to evaluate the

implementation of the development priorities, review activities to date and set future goals. UNDP Resident Representative and UN Resident Coordinator Ms Kaarina Immonen said the UN is working with the Lao government to find ways to address persisting development challenges by using the Sustainable Development Goals and the new partnership approach. "Currently a total of 16 development partners have signed the documents on the Vientiane Declaration on Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation and I believe the number of development partners will actually increase," she said. The declaration also foresees a shift from official development assistance towards greater partnership and new ways of development financing – including domestic resource mobilisation. In November this year, a Round Table Implementation Meeting will be organised in a province to report back on progress and identify further steps of action

(Vientiane Times 02 March 2016)

Int'l hydro conference highlights need for sustainability

(By Times Reporters)

The Lao government is hosting the sixth International Conference and Exhibition on Water Resources and Hydropower Development in Asia, aiming to promote the balance of the role of hydropower in the world and highlight challenges. The three-day event runs from March 1-3 in Vientiane. It gathers more than 650 experts, advisers and suppliers from some 40 countries to share their experiences in the sustainable development of hydropower resources and water resource management. The meeting will discuss all aspects of water resources development of particular relevance to the Asian region and represent major utilities, hydro plant developers, consulting practices and manufacturing companies, as well as financial and environmental specialists. "The timing of the conference is ideally suited to the rapid cur-

rent development of hydropower in Laos and the significant opportunities available to investors and industry practitioners," Minister of Energy and Mines Dr Khammany Inthirath said at the conference opening yesterday. The Lao government has an ambition to realise the development of hydroelectricity power facilities as an appropriate method of achieving sustainable social and economic development through electrification programmes as well as a source of income, he said. "Our hydropower potential is about 26,000MW. We are expecting that 10,000MW will be developed by 2020 and we believe we can achieve 20,000MW by 2030," Dr Khammany added. In 1975 the electrification ratio was just 3 percent, or 19,000 households. In 1995 it had reached 15 percent or 110,000 households, and today the

figure stands at 89 percent or more than one million households. From 1975-1995, only 200MW was developed or 10MW per year, all through public sector investment. From 1995-2020 about 10,000MW will be commissioned, or 400MW per year, with private sector investment of more than 90 percent. From 2020-2030, Laos anticipates that another 10,000MW will be added to the grid, or 1,000 MW every year. "We are proud of our success in hydropower development over the past 40 years. Hydropower not only benefits people by providing job opportunities and infrastructure, it also generates revenue for socio-economic development," Dr Khammanysaid. Laos is proud of its rapid

economic growth and its expanding role in helping the region to meet the growing and urgent demand for energy. In some parts of the world, economic uncertainty has created some volatility in the energy market, he said. "To cope with this and to reduce dependence on oil imports and other fuels we must promote energy efficiency and conservation and develop our renewable energy sources," he added. The Lao government is deeply committed to developing hydropower projects that meet the highest standards of economic, social and environmental sustainability. Every project must be a model of sustainability or it will not be built.

(Vientiane Times 02 March 2016)

Boy killed by falling pole when storm strikes Bokeo

(By Times Reporters)

A six year old boy died last week when the bamboo house he lived in with his parents partially collapsed during a storm that lashed Houayxai district in Bokeo province. The boy died after a concrete pole that supported the zinc roof of the dwelling in Pong village fell on him when heavy rain and strong winds passed through the area, according to the district labour and social welfare office. His family was working on a banana plantation owned by a Chinese company. As they had been there for several years, they decided to build a house on the plantation. When the storm hit, the boys' parents ran out of the house but he was unable to get out before the pole came crashing down. Local authorities have handed responsibility for the accident to the Chinese company and asked them to help the family financially, the office told *Vientiane Times* yesterday. The storm also destroyed more than 100 hectares of banana trees and houses in Pong and Choum villages, which are about 30km from the town of Houayxai. People who lost property have yet to receive any assistance from the relevant sectors, although no clear information has been

given at this point. Officials said weather extremes of this nature typically occur in Bokeo once every 10 years. According to the district's natural resource and environment office, which is responsible for collecting information on the damage sustained, no firm figures have been gathered as people have been slow to cooperate in the information gathering process. Houayxai district has about 2,000 hectares of banana plantations run by Chinese companies, according to the district agriculture and forestry office. Chinese firms have established banana plantations in several provinces, mainly Luang Namtha, Oudomxay, Bokeo and Xayaboury. Most of the crop is exported to China, while some is harvested to supply local markets. Bokeo province also suffered from severe weather when a prolonged cold spell covered the country at the end of January. More than 400 hectares of rice was damaged in Bokeo province, of which 150 hectares was in Houayxai district and 270 hectares in Pha-Oudom district, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The cold snap also killed livestock and other

crops in some northern and central provinces

but no weather-related deaths were reported.

(Vientiane Times 03 March 2016)

Ancient human remains, artefacts unearthed at Plain of Jars

(By Times Reporters)

Lao and Australian archaeologists examine the remains. PhaisythongChandara Excavations by Lao and Australian archaeologists at the Plain of Jars Site 1 in Paek district, XiengKhuang province, have uncovered three human remains and some artefacts dating back 2,500- 3,000 years. Two human remains were found together at Jar Site 1 some 70cm underground while the third was discovered 13 metres away. This was the third collaborative excavation by the team of archaeologists from the Archaeology Division of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism's Department of National Heritage, and the Australian National University. The team has also worked with provincial and district information, culture and tourism sectors to examine the remains and artefacts since they first visited the site, where they worked from February 7-29, according to a senior ministry official. Archaeology Division Director Dr Thonglith Luangkhoth told Vientiane Times yesterday that the remains and artefacts were located about 8km from the Ancient human remains, artefacts unearthed at Plain of Jars centre of Phonsavan district, and were now being kept safe in the provincial museum. "This discovery marks a significant milestone since archaeological excavations began in the area in 1930 in collaboration with a French archaeologist," he said. DrThonglith explained that some human remains and artefacts including tools and large stone vessels were initially uncovered. Then in 1995-1996 Lao and Japanese archaeologists unearthed more remains along with ancient relics including household items. DrThonglith said the human re-

mains and items were being kept at the XiengKhuang provincial museum, adding "The discovery of these human remains and artefacts is an important part of studying and researching the history of the Plain of Jars." He said the division planned to work with archaeologists from the provincial Information, Culture and Tourism Department and the Australian National University next year, adding "We will continue to search for other human remains and identify potential relics of interest in other areas." DrThonglith said the human remains would eventually be put on public display following further investigation of some small samples by the Australian National University's lab. There has long been public interest in the history of the Plain of Jars and the origins of the stone vessels but mystery still surrounds them. While some believe the jars were built to store human remains others theorise they were used to boil liquid during the KhounCheuang period. Jar Site 1 or (Thong HaiHin 1) is the more popular of the two sites in XiengKhuang province, located 8 km southwest of Phonsavan and easily reached by tuk-tuk or bike. The site counts 331 jars, including the largest single jar - said to have been the victory cup of KhounCheuang. According to local legend, KhounCheuang (6th century AD) fought a long battle against his enemies and liberated the local people from oppressive rulers. The jars were supposedly made to brew and store huge amounts of rice alcohol which were drunk during the seven-month long celebration held in honour of the victory

(Vientiane Times 03 March 2016)

WB Group extends support for education reform

(By Times Reporters)

The World Bank Group has reaffirmed its ongoing commitment to provide about US\$45 million to improve the Early Childhood Education programme and the Global Partnership for Education.



Ms Sengdeuane Lachanthaboun (centre) addresses the meeting.

The World Bank also indicated a willingness to support future programming in the Junior Secondary Education sub-sector, according to the Lao Australian Institute. This commitment was confirmed by the World Bank Group's Senior Director Ms Claudia Costin when she met with Laos' Acting Minister for Education and Sports Ms Sengdeuane Lachanthaboun during a Global Conference on Education Systems, which took place in Sydney, Australia, from February 29 to March 2. Ms Sengdeuane led Lao delegations from the ministry's departments and the European Union from Vientiane, who attended the conference to obtain a better understanding of how education system reform can be applied through the Basic Education Quality and Access in Laos (BEQUAL). The three-day global conference explored tools and research that strengthen education system policies and performance and promote Learning for All. The conference brought together an international group of education stakeholders, including ministers of education, policymakers, academics and researchers, to explore the evolution of education

systems research and to highlight new tools that enable educational leaders to better understand education systems. During the conference, Ms Sengdeuane contributed to policy dialogue by participating in a ministers' forum with education ministers from Papua New Guinea, Guatemala, Iraq and Kurdistan. "The global conference has helped to shape Laos' ways of forward thinking in attaining education development goals," she said. The conference also provided Lao education leaders with a better understanding of the complexities of education system policy intent, implementation and service delivery. The conference confirmed the importance of managing educational reform from a systems perspective: that is, education reform should be supported in the context of educational policy; management and administration; teacher education, and curriculum and materials development. The conference emphasised that all elements of educational delivery must be treated and supported as a whole. Ms Sengdeuane said the global conference highlighted the opportunities being provided by the BEQUAL programme in supporting Laos to implement the 2015 - 2020 Education Sector Development Plan in the primary sub-sector. This is because BEQUAL works to support education systems and provides resourcing in a flexible way. Joint funding provided by the Australian government and the European Union through the BEQUAL programme directly supports the ministry to develop the curriculum, teachers and schools needed to ensure that children go to school, stay in school and learn whilst in the classroom. In Australia, Ms Sengdeuane and delegations met with senior representatives from the World Bank and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to discuss existing and

ongoing support to the education sector in Laos. “The conference was very successful and will have a sustainable impact on the

way the ministry will manage and support educational reform in Laos over the coming years,” MsSengdeuane added.

(Vientiane Times 04 March 2016)