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

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State must campaign strongly on forest regulations

(By KhonesavanhLatsaphao)

The state needs to take serious action to enforce the regulations governing the forestry sector in order to remove Laos from the international unregulated logging list.



One of the remaining mountain forest areas in Laos.

Deputy Director of the Forestry Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Mr Boualy Phameuang told *Vientiane Times* on Friday that the structure of forest regulations and forest management guidelines is good but that the problem is a lack of understanding and enforcement. In fact, the structure of forest management has been in place for a long time but its application is not solid or comprehensive because forest authorities in the provinces, districts and villages might not appreciate them. "We need the ministry to employ many methods in the campaign to enforce the forest regulations in cooperation with the relevant authorities in the provinces such as using photos and posters setting out the various laws and regulations," he explained. It's not only the struc-

ture of forest management that is still lacking as many officials in the ministries also misunderstand about matters of law as well because the level of education of many people is still not high. Currently Laos is one of many countries still on the list of those where unregulated logging takes place. Laos is listed because internationally it is considered that some aspects of forest management are not sufficiently enforced because logging is not well regulated. It will take a long time to improve the system of forest management in order to remove Laos from the international list concerning unregulated logging. According to the Department of Forestry Inspection, Laos has been working for three years to address the problem of unregulated logging. It is expected that Laos could be taken off the list in the next five or six years, as work to accomplish this is now 40 to 50 percent complete. Right now the EU is working with Laos to expedite the process in a bid to improve forestry and environmental protection in Laos. The government is spending several billion kip each year to increase the size of protected forestry areas. The government planned to increase nationwide forest cover to 65 percent by 2015 and to 70 percent by 2020. The three categories of forest in Laos managed by the government are national protection areas, national protection forests, and national production forests.

(Vientiane Times 02 April 2016)

Cardamom brings great changes for Phongsaly farmers

(By SomsackPongkhao)

Many local farmers in Phongsaly province are shifting to plant cardamom after earning lucrative income from growing this crop and selling it to Chinese traders. Some families earned as much as 40 million kip per year from growing cardamom, which enabled them to send their children to school and build new houses as well as improve their living standards.



Farmers in Phongsaly province are moving to plant cardamom to earn income.

Uncle PaengPhongsone, 56 years old, from Mokyon village in Phongsaly province's Samphan district told *Vientiane Times* last week that cardamom was not the main crop planted in his family but it still brought them a huge income. "I earned 40 million kip last year from growing cardamom, particularly the Guangdong species. Other villagers also earned huge incomes from this crop, ranging from 20 million to 40 million kip," he said. However most villagers are very concerned about the fluctuation of the cardamom market, particularly when more people move to grow this crop as the prices might go down. A painful lesson has been learned by farmers who grew rubber and falling prices of rubber led farmers in many provinces of Laos to lose profits while some had to resort to destroying their trees to grow other crops instead. Therefore the farmers in Phongsaly province do not want the same

lesson to be repeated and called for the government to help sustain the market. An expert from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry MrKhamsonSisayout told *Vientiane Times* last week that the price of cardamom has always fluctuated over the past 10 years but it has mostly increased. "We conducted a survey in 2014 and found that the value of cardamom exports was as high as US\$40 million in that year. But I think that the exact figure could be higher," he said. "Our problem is that we have still yet to find the end user for our cardamom so that farmers can earn more income." At the moment, farmers in Phongsaly province mainly sell their cardamom to purchasing agents who often try to push down the prices they pay for the cardamom. An agriculture official in Phongsaly province, MrBounhiengSaensoulin said more than 7,000 hectares of cardamom has been grown in the entirety of Phongsaly province, of which 1,500 hectares are grown in Samphan district. "The demand for cardamom is quite high at the moment. Chinese traders usually come to buy cardamom directly from villagers," he said. There are two types of cardamom, including Pakxong and Guangdong species. The price of cardamom (Guangdong species) ranges from 320,000 kip to 400,000 kip per kg while the price of Pakxong is about 40,000 and 50,000 kip per kg. Authorities are still guessing as to what the cardamom is used for in China and speculated that it could be being used in the manufacture of herbal medicines. Cardamom is not only generating income for farmers but also helping to prevent deforestation in the province because cardamom requires a shady understory to thrive and cannot tolerate direct sunlight.

(*Vientiane Times* 04 April 2016)

NUOL students debate climate change

(By Sangkhomsay Bubphanouvong)

National University of Laos (NUOL) students upgraded their understanding of climate change after attending “The World We Want to Live In” presentation and debate at the thne NUOL on Friday. The European Union (EU) Delegation to Laos and NUOL organised the student climate change debate to raise awareness amongst students regarding the issue and its impacts for people around the world and in Laos. A presentation outlined to students and lecturers the direct effect of climate change on the nation and strategies to cope with it. The event was attended by NUOL Vice President Professor Dr Somsy Gnophanxay, EU Chargé d’Affaires Mr Michel Goffin, climate change expert Mr Ignacio Tourino Soto, along with lecturers and students from the university’s faculties. Mr Michel said the EU gave the utmost

importance to dealing with the challenge of climate change in Laos and around the world. He believed this activity would assist participants and students to gain knowledge and understanding about the significance of working together to deal with climate change especially for a developing country like Laos. The student debate activity was divided into six groups with each group comprising six students. The students were able to present their visions of how Laos would be able to reduce climate change to assist sustainable socioeconomic development and poverty reduction. The students highlighted that dealing with climate change would benefit the quality of the environment as well as public health and safety. The top three groups in the student debate were awarded scholarship prizes.

(Vientiane Times 04 April 2016)

Research team proposes better banana plantation management

(By Times Reporters)

An agricultural research team has called for the government to formulate and enforce policies and measures to manage banana plantation investments in Laos after they were shown to have negative impacts on society and the environment. The team from the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) and the National University of Laos recently conducted a study on banana plantations, supported by various international organisations. Its recommendations include the formulation of appropriate market policies in order to avoid the risks of falling prices and policy implementation for the proper enforcement of environmental laws. The relevant sectors should also set environmental management plans and undertake assessments before approving such investments in the future. They

should also carry out policy implementation to instruct and enforce the use of environmentally friendly production inputs and manage chemical inputs. Advanced payments for restoring and rehabilitation of natural resources (soil, water quality and others) should be required as a deposit in case investors don’t comply with the conditions imposed on them. The team also recommended establishing provincial committees to screen and register chemicals including pesticides and herbicides used for agricultural production and improve, revise and enforce the list of banned chemicals in Laos. The government should also direct the relevant sectors to increase the capacity of district authorities in terms of implementation, monitoring and management of banana businesses and establish mechanisms to involve village and dis-

strict authorities in the agribusiness or concession approval process. The relevant sectors should build capacity (based on the role and mandate of each department) for provincial investment committees who would be considered as the technical secretariat for the provincial governor in the investment approval process. To stop banana plantations that create environmental and social impacts, and at the same time promote and recognise good practices, the government should suspend 100 percent concessions for banana plantations. The government should also allocate a budget for research and study to identify technical measurements, standards and production techniques to be used as a basic template for the approval process and test for long term impacts on people's health and the environment. To achieve such positive improvements, it will require good cooperation from the different concerned sec-

tors, a budget for implementation and assistance from international organisations in Laos. Commercial banana production started in the country in 2005, particularly in Luang Namtha province, with different business models coexisting such as 1+4, 2+3 and 100 percent concessions. There are deep concerns about the environmental and social impacts of banana plantations as a result of below standard management and monitoring systems, especially plantation companies. Banana plantation investment provides income generation but many problems have been identified regarding the environment and health. NAFRI Director General, Dr Bounthong Bouahom said the recently completed study will provide good data for the government and the relevant sectors in seeking to redress the issues and create a better future for the industry.

(Vientiane Times 04 April 2016)

EU helping improve living conditions of Phongsaly ethnic communities

(By Somsack Pongkhao)

The European Union (EU) appreciated the success of its funded projects in Phongsaly province which has contributed to helping local communities get out of extreme poverty, according to leading officials. EU Charge d'Affaires Michel Goffin and French Ambassador Claudine Ledoux led a delegation to visit projects funded by the EU, France and other European Development Partners in Khua, May and Samphan districts of Phongsaly province to assess the projects' implementation and achievements. Mr Goffin said one of the most pleasing things is the success of the project activities. "Many villagers have got out of extreme poverty, [but] I'm not saying that they are rich ..." He said some villagers had many children but are able to send them to schools. They were not only growing rice but also other crops which generated higher income to improve their

livelihoods. Mr Goffin said he was impressed to see good cooperation between NGOs and the government in project activities that included women as he believed women would change the life of the villagers for the better. Since 2006 the EU has contributed more than 6 million euros for Care International's Food Security Project and Remote Ethnic Women Programme to help improve the equitable quality of life for remote ethnic women, who are land poor, have the highest food insecurity and lowest nutrition and health status in the four districts of Khua, May, Samphan and Nhot-ou. Some 62 villages are expected to benefit from various activities designed to promote women's opportunities for income generation; to build resilience to climate change; to strengthen women's role in the economy; to improve food insecurity and nutrition status; to pro-

mote better maternal; neonatal and reproductive health and hygiene; to promote respect, value and voice of remote ethnic women; to reduce gender based violence and to build the capacities of district officials in order to ensure ethnic women's access to basic services. Phongsaly also benefited from the 19.6 million euros Northern Upland Development Programme (NUDP), of which half of the figure was contributed by the EU. The programme is to eradicate poverty and to achieve sustainable development in the Northern Uplands for 230 villages of nine districts in Phongsaly, Huapan and Luang Prabang provinces and aims at securing and improving the livelihoods of the rural poor in selected areas of the Northern Uplands, based on community-driven ap-

proaches to sustainable land management and agricultural production. Under this programme, the delegation visited a pasture improvement project, goat farm, coffee and cardamom plantation, a cardamom oven and storage facility in Samphan district as well as an agricultural technical service centre in May district where the programme provided capacity building on fish and mushroom production techniques and livestock raising. Phongsaly is one of the poorest provinces in Laos, where 61 percent of children under five years old are stunted; 62 percent of people still practice open defecation; 65 percent of villages are considered poor and only 35 percent of villages have a health facility within two hours travel time.

(Vientiane Times 04 April 2016)

ADB affirms support for Lao development

(By Somsack Pongkhao)

Asian Development Bank (ADB) has affirmed its continuing support for development in Laos to enable the country to graduate from least developed country status by 2020.



Mr Takehiko Nakao.

ADB President Mr Takehiko Nakao on Monday met Prime Minister Mr Thongsing Thammavong, Minister of Finance Dr Lien Thikey and Minister of Planning and Investment Mr Somdy Douangdy, to discuss how the ADB can support the country's infrastructure, private sector, skills development, and health services. Mr Nakao also praised the Lao government's efforts to sus-

tain economic growth while noting the country still faced several challenges which needed to be addressed. "The Lao PDR's economy is performing strongly as the government steps up efforts to diversify the sources of growth, including agribusiness and tourism, away from over-dependence on mining and electricity," said Mr Nakao. "To support diversification, the government should strengthen macroeconomic management, develop infrastructure, enhance human capital, and promote regional cooperation and integration." Mr Nakao warned that Laos needed to address its fiscal deficit and low foreign exchange reserve levels through efforts to mobilise revenues such as expanding the tax base, improving revenue administration, and better planning of medium-term expenditure. He also attended the 20th Asean Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meetings in Vientiane where he discussed the Asian economic outlook and ways to build greater financial resilience and foster an effective Asean Economic Community. Mr Nakao spoke to Vientiane Times

after meeting with government leaders on Monday, saying that Laos was an important partner of ADB. He said Laos joined the ADB as a founding member in 1966. Since then, it has received US\$1.8 billion in loans, US\$501 million in grants, and US\$153 million in technical assistance. "We have supported Lao transportation, energy sector, urban sector, agriculture and tourism sector. We will continue to support Laos in coming years," he said. This year ADB plans to provide grants and concessional loans to higher secondary education and technical and vocational education and training programmes, which will increase job opportunities particularly among agriculture workers who comprise about 70 percent of the labour market. ADB also said it is targeting to provide more than US\$300 million in concessional loans and grants over 3 years from 2017 through 2019 to strengthen rural infrastructure, boost agriculture value chains and tourism, expand water supplies and corridor town development, facilitate trade, and improve health services delivery. ADB's upcoming 5-year Country Partnership Strategy will help Laos promote inclusive and sus-

tainable economic growth through support to the government's 8th National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016-2020. In his address to the Asean Finance Ministers' and Central Bank Governors' Meetings, Mr Nakao noted Asean had a labour force of more than 320 million people, making it the third-largest after the People's Republic of China and India. Asean represents a major economic bloc, with a combined gross domestic product of more than US\$2.4 trillion. "Asean's single market and production base hold great potential to accelerate Asean's growth and increase its economic resilience," he said. "It is important for Asean countries to pursue sound macroeconomic policies, strengthen open investment and trade regimes, and promote financial integration in the region, backed by good regulatory frameworks and sound macroprudential policy." The Lao PDR is currently the Chair of Asean. Mr Nakao and Mr Thongsing agreed on the importance of deepening regional cooperation and integration. Mr Nakao said the ADB-supported Asean Infrastructure Fund can mobilise further infrastructure investments to promote integration.

(Vientiane Times 06 April 2016)

Laos seeks consultation on national development policies

(By Times Reporters)

The Lao government is now seeking closer consultation and discussion with all national and international stakeholders for further improvement of the Round Table Process as part of follow-up actions of last year's roundtable meeting.



Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Dr. Kikeo Chanthaboury (right) co-chairs the meeting in Vientiane yesterday.

The meeting was co-chaired by Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Dr. Kikeo Chanthaboury and UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Kaarina Immonen. In his opening remarks at the meeting, Dr. Kikeo said the meeting brought together the stakeholders of national and international sectors to discuss further development of the Round Table Process and follow up actions on previous issues discussed last year during the 12th High Level Round Table Meeting. "I couldn't express more on its importance of a linkage between Sector Working Groups and policy dialogues at the Round Table Meeting and Round Table Implementation Meetings," he said, noting that this year's Round Table Process Retreat will be a platform for constructive comments and suggestions. As part of the objectives of yesterday's retreat, the 8th National Social and Economic Development Plan was also brought into discussion at the meeting to ensure Laos' effective implementation for graduation from least developed status by 2020. In addition, it also sets to complete Laos' unfinished MDG business, and deliver early progress on the Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs). The Lao government and its development partners are expecting that national development policies will have greater impacts on sustainable development when the policy is matched with what actually happens on the ground and at the sectoral level. Meanwhile, the UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative Ms. Kaarina Immonen also said that the Lao government and its development partners wish to achieve better results towards the 8th National Social and Economic Development Plan and the SDGs' agenda. "Today's meeting will reflect the lessons learnt and experiences of the roundtable meetings over the past years and we will discuss on follow-up actions on recent roundtable meeting for more effective results in the coming years," she said. She noted that this meeting will be a platform for participants to brainstorm on how Sector Working Groups can be strengthened and how synergies between Sector Working Groups and roundtable meeting themselves can be enhanced and advance the national development agenda. "The year 2016 is the year we all made commitment to support the national development agenda that will enable Laos to become eligible for graduation from LDC status by 2020," Ms. Immonen said, adding that the Lao government would not complete the goal alone as it needs more diverse partnerships in the years ahead. Last year, the government and its development partners also endorsed a new ten-year framework for development cooperation in Laos with the "Vientiane Partnership Declaration" signed during the 12th High Level Round Table Meeting. The signing ceremony was also witnessed by Prime Minister Thongsing-Thammavong along with UNDP Administrator Ms. Helen Clark.

(Vientiane Times 04 April 2016)

EU supports global action to address people trafficking

(By Times Reporters)

The European Union (EU) has contributed 10 million euros to support global action to prevent and address trafficking in people and the smuggling of migrants. The European Union together with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and International Organisation for Migration (IOM) joined forces with the government to officially launch the "Global Action to Prevent and Address Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants Programme" in Vientiane yesterday. EU Chargé d'Affaires Mr Michel Goffin, UNICEF Country Representative Ms Hongwei Gao, Director of United Nations Social and Economic Division, Department of International Organisations, Mr Daovy Vongxay, IOM Representative Mr Damien Kilner and Crime Prevention Expert, Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling Section, UNODC Mrs Silke Albert, addressed the meeting to officially launch the programme in Laos. The programme is a four-year (2015-2019) joint initiative that will be implemented by UNODC, IOM and UNICEF in partnership with the local government authorities in 13 countries across the world including Laos and will be focused on assistance to the authorities, to civil society organisations, and to victims of trafficking and smuggling. This joint initiative will assist countries to develop and implement effective responses to trafficking in people and the smuggling of migrants. The dual prevention and protection

approach has been adopted and includes six key actions such as strategy and policy development, legislative assistance, capacity building, regional and trans-regional cooperation, protections and assistance to victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants and assistance and support to children among victims of trafficking and smuggled migrants. "The EU considers that trafficking is the slavery of our time. Trafficking in human beings is a severe violation of fundamental rights. It is also a serious form of organised crime, driven by very high profits and sustained by a high demand for the services of its victims. It affects women and men, girls and boys, and causes profound and often life-long harm to victims and communities," Mr Goffin said in his address. "The EU contributes 10 million euros to this global action and the Delegation has actively lobbied for Laos to be among the recipient countries, and we are looking forward to seeing the successful implementation of this programme in Laos," he added. At the meeting, participants were informed about the programme overview, findings from the programme's consultative mission and action plan for Laos, while representatives from Laos' Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare presented the Ministry activities for assisting human trafficking victims and safe migration as well as challenges the country faces in dealing with this matter.

(Vientiane Times 07 April 2016)

Rubber association set to be established

(By Times Reporters)

The Lao National Rubber Association will be established sometime this year in order to help provide a sustainable income for rubber growers. The association's secretariat, which involves officials from different sectors in Vientiane and target provinces is currently improving the documents and rules of the association to coincide with Lao regulations and serve local communities. Deputy Director of the Forest Plantation and Investment Division, Mr Bounlieng Singvichit told *Vientiane Times* yesterday that the secretariat is preparing the second steering committee meeting of the association to consult about the rules. The steering committee will be chaired by the former Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Mr Vilayvanh-Phomkhe, who is also president of the secretariat. Many rubber growers, especially in the northern provinces, have been struggling with the low price of rubber on the world market and the limited quota of product imported by China, he said. The association will serve as a coordinator and advisor in bargaining the price of rubber production and the import quota from neighbouring countries, said Mr Bounlieng. Neighbouring countries such as Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia have already established their national rubber associations and Laos should establish its own for cooperation and integration with the region, he commented. Some rubber

growers in northern Laos have struggled to get a fair price for their product on the volatile Chinese export market, with no bilateral agreement between the two countries to ensure stability. Some Chinese traders are flouting the new regulation by importing illegally across parts of the border that are not well monitored. But recently the Chinese government imposed a quota on five companies that buy Lao rubber limiting them to an import of 2,000 tonnes per year. Meanwhile growers in northern provinces are tapping their rubber far in excess of the quota. Many farmers have to cut their rubber trees to produce other commercial crops to generate income, while some have declared they will sell their rubber plantation land. The limited market has caused a number of problems for rubber growers. Mr Bounlieng hoped that the national rubber association will help to push the price of rubber up through cooperation and bargaining with neighbouring countries and expanding the market in the region. Laos currently has about 280,000 hectares of rubber trees, mostly planted by foreign investors. In northern provinces such as LuangNamtha, Oudomxay, Phongsaly, Bokeo and LuangPrabang the plantations are owned by Chinese companies while in the southern provinces of Champassak, Attapeu, Xekong and Saravan the plantations are owned by Vietnamese companies.

(*Vientiane Times* 08 April 2016)