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

Bonne réception et bonne lecture,  
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## France extends support for development projects

By Times Reporters

France has agreed to extend its support for development projects to be implemented in Laos over the next three years, with the main focus on agriculture. Two financial agreements valued at 1.5 million euros were reached on Thursday between the Ministry of Planning and Investment, the French Embassy in Vientiane, and the French Development Agency (AFD). Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Dr Kikeo Chanthaboury, French Ambassador to Laos Ms Claudine Ledoux, and AFD Regional Director in charge for Laos Mr Philippe Steinmetz signed the agreements.



Dr Kikeo Chanthaboury and Ms Claudine Ledoux shake hands after signing the agreements.

The first agreement aims to follow up the development of the coffee sector, while increasing support for the northern provinces where the crop is expanding, and also provide further support to the national organisation of the sector. The second agreement relates to the restoration of an irrigated area in Khammuan province. “In addition to the objectives on production and income generation for the local population, this project aims to implement the participatory management of irrigation involving equally national authorities and customers, in accordance with the guidelines mentioned by the

national strategy,” stated a press release issued at the signing ceremony. France's experience in this field is well known and Laos will benefit from it through this project, according to the press release. Even though the Northern Upland Development Programme, which has been co-financed by the AFD, the European Union, the Swiss Cooperation for Common Fund, and German cooperation, came to an end, the two components of the programme - agriculture and conservation, and rural infrastructure - will continue until 2018. Beside the agreed projects, two other French-supported projects are being considered. They are the agricultural development project on the Nakai Plateau, which is being prepared by Khammuan province with the Nam Theun Power Company, the concessionary of the Nam Theun 2 dam, and the nutrition project, which will support national policy while reinforcing the role of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in targeted provinces. The AFD also confirmed its sectoral concentration to support the Lao government in the sectors of agriculture and rural development by actively participating in the Sectoral Working Group co-chaired by France. The AFD also intends to retain its active support for other sectors in response to Lao government requirements, such as the enhancement of cultural heritage and urban development. For its part, the French embassy will pursue its action in the field of governance with two priorities: respect for the rule of law, and the emergence of civil society in Laos. In collaboration with the AFD, France has confirmed its keen interest to contribute to the preservation of Laos' heritage and its support for the excavation and enhancement of national treasures. The French embassy has also showed its determination to develop scholarship opportunities for Lao youngsters who would like to enroll in universities in France or the Asean

region. Over the next three years the French embassy will focus on the promotion of research accompanying French institutes represented in Laos. Overall, French development assistance to Laos is estimated at 15 million euros per year. Grant assistance from

France to Laos is estimated at 25 million euros a year, and 25 million globally, including France's financial aid through the European Union, the United Nations, and other multilateral channels.

*(Vientiane Times 04 June 2016)*

## Unicef supports Laos in strengthening child protection

*By Times Reporters*

Unicef Laos remains committed to working with and supporting Laos in strengthening the child protection system in the country. Unicef Representative to Laos Ms Hongwei Gao addressed a recent event to reveal the preliminary findings of Laos' first national "Violence against Children Survey". Unicef has a keen interest in exploring how the agency can work with the Lao government in translating the survey findings into action, she said.



*Children in rural areas of Laos.*

These findings, among others, will provide the government with solid evidence to inform and shape the future policies that will strengthen the protection system for children from all forms of violence. "Now is the time to prevent and stop violence against children through awareness raising, commitment to policy development and concrete follow up actions," she said. Ms Hongwei said that, for

the first time, there is a strong and sound understanding of the magnitude and nature of violence against children in Laos.

It is now clear who is experiencing violence and what types of violence are most prevalent. While practical recommendations will only come with the final report, it is already clear how important it will be to develop the capacity of child protection professionals to enable them to better identify, refer and support children who are at risk of harm or are already experiencing harm. "We must continue to raise awareness amongst families, communities and the general public of the long term adverse effects of violence against children, and the need to adopt behaviours and practices that encourage a child's healthy development," she added. "Family and community-based child protection services are an essential part of this response," Ms Hongwei stressed. It must also be noted that the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare and the Lao Women's Union, in close coordination with the National Commission for Mothers and Children, developed a Response Plan to accompany the survey. This was to ensure that children who were identified as having experienced any form of violence during the survey's data collection process were referred to counselling and protection services. "We hope that we can learn from the development and implementation of this response plan to improve availability and access to services for all children who need them," she said. Violence against children exists in many countries and remains a

challenge. Laos is no exception. Violence against children cuts across boundaries of age, geography, religion, ethnicity and income. It affects children's physical, mental and psychological development and impacts on children's attitudes and behaviour as adults. Ms Hongwei is confident that the government will give priority to ensuring that the findings from the survey are communicated and used to develop effective strategies and programmes to further enhance protection for all children from vio-

lence. The findings will inform the implementation of the National Plan of Action on the Prevention and Elimination of Violence against Women and Violence against Children (2014-2020). "We count on the government's leadership and coordination to take the findings from the survey forward - to the highest levels - and to Lao families and communities, to ensure that all children can live free from violence," Ms Hongwei added.

*(Vientiane Times 04 June 2016)*

## From weaver to business owner

*By Xayxana Leukai*

*A national tradition leads artisan to a better life*

Silk is an essential part of Ms Bouasavanh Siththivanh's livelihood and it is also a national tradition that provides her with a better life. Ms Bouasavanh, owner of the Lao Silk Handicraft Shop, is a native of Luang Prabang province but moved to Vientiane almost 40 years ago.



*Ms Bouasavanh Siththivanh (left) talks about her work to a visitor.*

She is one of many Lao women who earn a living by farming, raising silkworms, and weaving by loom together with her parents since she was young. She has learned all aspects of weaving from her parents, from cultivating cotton, to silk spinning, and the design of patterns. Even though she updates

her designs to match modern customer demands, all of her designs still preserve some traditional Lao style to ensure they can be carried on for future generations. Originally she was weaving traditional silk skirts and other items of clothing for the 'Friends Help Friends' organisation before deciding to leave to start her own business in 2004. She quickly found that weaving was a potential source of income and turned it into the main focus of her family business. Initially, she wove alone to support her family but as business and the demand for Lao silk in different styles grew, she chose to expand her business from herself to 33 employees working on 33 looms. Most employees come to weave at her shop in Sisangvone village while some bring silk and other materials to work from home. The average monthly income of an employee can be anywhere from one million to two million kip, depending on the quantity produced. As a member of the Lao Handicraft Association, Ms Bouasavanh's silk products, including sinh (traditional skirt) and sashes, are promoted at var-

ious trade fairs in Laos and abroad. These fairs help attract customers to Ms Bouasavanh's work. The Lao Silk Handicraft Shop is currently producing such quality silk cloth that it is exporting to both Japan and France. The silk that is woven at Ms Bouasavanh's shop is 100 percent genuine, including mailap, mamon, maikhamphan and maipae-noy. "We focus on selecting quality over quantity," Ms Bouasavanh said. Since the business continues making silk products in the traditional way they were certified as part of the 'One District, One Product' brand

in May this year. This recognition makes her proud as she has been working this way for over 40 years. Her work also allows her to support her eight children to undertake further education. Weaving not only preserves Lao heritage but can also create job opportunities to help some to live above the poverty line, helping to meet the Lao government's targets by 2020. "The thing that I am most proud of is that this work helps preserve our national tradition from generation to generation," said Ms Bouasavanh.

*(Vientiane Times 04 June 2016)*

## **Asean socio-cultural ministers prepare documents for submission to 28th Asean Summit**

*By Times Reporters*

The 15th meeting of the Asean Socio-Cultural Community Council (ASCC) convened in Luang Prabang on Saturday to consider several important documents for submission to Asean leaders for adoption at the 28th Asean Summit in September. The meeting was opened by Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and attended by Socio-cultural ministers from Asean member states, Asean Secretary General Le Luong Minh, associated officials and Asean delegates.



*Dr Kikeo Chanthaboury and Ms Claudine Ledoux shake hands after signing the agreements.*

Addressing the gathering, Mr Thongloun said "This meeting is an important milestone. The ministers will jointly consider important documents before submitting them to Asean leaders for adoption at the 28th Asean Summit to be held in Vientiane in September." "The main documents are the Vientiane Declaration on Transition from Informal Employment to Formal Employment towards Decent Work Promotion in ASEAN, and the Vientiane Declaration on Reinforcing Cultural Heritage Cooperation in Asean." Mr Thongloun said Asean was a region that was uniquely characterised by diverse cultures, customs, languages and religions as well as political systems. But despite these diversities, the people of Asean member states live together in harmony and solidarity, in caring and sharing societies, and together they preserve and promote the unique cultures and traditions of individual Asean member states. This, in essence, forms the unique Asean identity often described as "Unity in Diversity". Asean has made steady progress and achievements in political and security cooperation as well as

socio-economic development cooperation within the Asean region and the wider region, Mr Thongloun added. He said this has contributed greatly to Asean's role in improving the livelihoods of its peoples through coordination mechanisms and cooperation projects, the formulation of policies for capacity building, and the harmonisation of organisations and institutions. "Over the

past half decade, I am pleased to see that cooperation under the Asean Socio-Cultural Community Pillar, including the sectoral bodies concerned, has gained satisfactory achievements, especially the 100 percent successful implementation of the Asean Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint for 2009-2015," he noted

*(Vientiane Times 06 June 2016)*

## **Concerns persist over use of chemical fertiliser in banana plantations**

*By Times Reporters*

Despite reassurance from provincial officials, members of the public are unhappy that banana growers in Bokeo province are still being allowed to use chemical fertilisers. While people recognise that many chemical pesticides are banned because of the danger to consumers and the environment, many are questioning why chemical fertilisers are still being used on Bokeo's crops. Director of the provincial Agriculture and Forestry Department, Mr Khamxone Keopaseuth, recently told *Vientiane Times* that some chemical fertilisers were being used by banana farmers in parts of the province, with the permission of the department's agriculture sector. However, he stressed that chemical pesticides were banned. "Chemical fertilisers won't harm people who eat bananas because the fertiliser is only used to improve the soil," he said. Mr Khamxone added that the department had been authorising the use of the fertiliser for a long time and it wasn't just a recent occurrence as some people thought. The provinces of Bokeo, Luang Prabang, Oudomxay and Phongsaly mainly grow bananas for export to China, with the majority of plantations located in Bokeo and Phongsaly. Officials

also wished to point out that no farmer had recently been found illegally disposing of used plastic banana covers. Several growers have built storage facilities to keep the discarded items for later removal to an official waste site. Previously, large quantities of plastic covers were dumped and scattered in fields following the harvest of bananas for export to China. Not all of the bananas grown use chemical fertiliser as some farmers prefer to use compost and bio-fertiliser to improve soil nutrients. A widespread belief today is that many farmers around the country are using chemical fertilisers and pesticides to grow rice. People are now concerned about the potential hazards of eating rice that has not been farmed organically. Another official said many people misunderstood the difference between pesticides and chemical fertiliser, with the latter being harmless to consumers. Most farmers in the provinces use chemical fertiliser on their rice. It's hard to grow crops using animal manure such as that produced by buffaloes because one hectare of rice requires about five tonnes of livestock dung. Most rice-producing countries, especially in Asean, use chemical fertilisers to improve the quality of the soil.

*(Vientiane Times 06 June 2016)*

## Govt takes action to address illegal logging

By Times Reporters

The government has instructed ministries and provinces to delegate responsibility in implementing measures outlined last month that prohibit the export of timber, unprocessed wood, and non-timber forest products. In the notice issued on June 1, the government instructed the authorities to resolutely punish, without compromise, those who violate these measures. The measures were detailed in Prime Ministerial Order No. 15 issued on May 13. Ministries and provinces were told to educate officials about the measures, so that everyone fully understood them and the measures were interpreted correctly and uniformly. The government instructed the Government Inspection Authority to entrust its officials to work with provincial authorities to carry out inspections and to penalise those found guilty of illegal logging and trade. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was told to work with central and local bodies to gather information about wood amassed in collecting yards known as Sanam 2 across the country, and report their findings to the government. The Ministry of Industry and Commerce was told to partner with central and local bodies to take urgent action to inspect sawmills located in national preservation and protection forests, as well as production forests. Sawmills found to be operating illegally must be shut down and their equipment seized, to become state property, while the operators must be prosecuted in accordance with the law. In the long term, the authorities were asked to regulate and upgrade wood processing plants so that their operations meet acceptable standards. Ministries and local departments were told to partner with

security forces to guard against and prevent illegal logging, especially in forests that are vulnerable to illegal logging, and those found guilty of engaging in illegal activities must be prosecuted, disciplined and penalised. The government warned border checkpoint officials not to facilitate or permit the export of timber and non-timber forest products without permission from the government. Those who violate the regulations are to be disciplined and punished. The government has told all central and local departments to assign technical officials to work together to implement these measures and report progress to the government regularly to seek guidance. Only one day after the notice was issued and a few weeks after the Prime Ministerial Order, a passenger bus loaded with timber and travelling from Khammuan province to Vietnam, came to the attention of the authorities after an explosion killed at least eight Vietnamese nationals on board. The shipment of timber was clearly destined for export, despite the government's ban on the export of timber and unprocessed wood. Witnesses said the timber was obviously an illegal consignment and a clear infringement of the government's latest measures. There has been a lot of public discussion recently on this latest move by the government. Everyone has welcomed the measures but there has been a common response, with people questioning how effectively the measures will be implemented and whether they will result in a significant decline in illegal logging, which has been a longstanding concern.

*(Vientiane Times 06 June 2016)*

## Better maps needed to secure UNESCO listing of Plain of Jars

*By Times Reporters*

Creating a more detailed map of the Plain of Jars and improving the various sites will be the focus of preparations for listing the tourist attraction as a world heritage site. The Plain of Jars in Xieng Khuang province contains thousands of scattered ancient stone vessels, whose purpose is not fully understood, but are endlessly fascinating to visitors and one of Laos' most popular attractions. Director General of the Department of Heritage, Dr Bounthieng Siripraphanh, told *Vientiane Times* on Thursday about the progress made so far in submitting a proposal to the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The department hopes that the Plain of Jars will become Laos' third world heritage site. "The big task for us now is to create a detailed map of the boundaries and to remove all unexploded ordnance from the area," he said. The government first considered submitting the Plain of Jars to UNESCO for consideration as a world heritage site back in 1998, believing it to have outstanding universal value. Several related documents were finalised in 2009. A meeting of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism with Xieng Khuang provincial authorities in March this year selected 12 sites on the Plain of Jars for inscription on UNESCO's list of world heritage sites. Following this, the ministry invited

international experts to discuss the outstanding universal value of the megalithic sites. "That meeting was a milestone in preparing information to be annexed to the master documents for future submission to UNESCO," Dr Bounthieng said. He admitted that the preparations would take some time, but said they would be finished by late next year. It would be known by late 2018 whether the proposal was successful. Aside from the compilation of documents, it was necessary to put together a technical team to build understanding among local residents about the heritage value of the site and the ways in which they would benefit, Dr Bounthieng said. The project plan drawn up by the committee responsible includes identifying sources of funding for the protection, development and promotion of the site, and assembling a group of experts and capable personnel to drive forward the government's policy on the protection, development and promotion of tourism in general. The Plain of Jars is one of two places the government hopes UNESCO will list as a world heritage site in the near future. It has already been successful in having the town of Luang Prabang and the Vat Phou temple complex in Champassak province added to the list. The government will next propose the Hin Namno National Protected Area for listing as a natural world heritage site.

*(Vientiane Times 06 June 2016)*

## Luang Prabang theatre preserves art of storytelling

By Patithin Phetmeuangphuan

Luang Prabang province, in northern Laos, offers many things to do but the traditional storytelling at Garavek Theatre is one of the more interesting options. Luang Prabang is a famous tourist destination in Laos, attracting thousands of visitors every month. Some people go there to be immersed in the traditions of Lao culture and to hopefully learn a little bit about Lao history. The theatre was opened with these tourists in mind.



A seasoned khaen player teaches a boy the basics of the instrument.

The Garavek Theatre is a small venue under the direction of Mr Nicholas Gibson. It opened in 2014 after moving from Vientiane and is now located in Phonheuang village in the provincial capital. The stories are related in English and accompanied by the khaen, a traditional reed instrument. Tickets for a performance sell for 50,000 kip. The people who work at the theatre have always been fascinated by folktales and legends, particularly stories that recount the origins of social groups and also the origins of natural features and other everyday things. Luang Prabang has a tonne of these stories. The stories are about the rivers and mountains; how they came to be there and where the names come from. There are currently only six people employed at the theatre: two storytellers, Siphai and Thongsamay, a khaen player, and Keo-udon and Noy, who sell tickets and serve drinks. Then there is Nicholas, the director of the theatre, who also works the lights during the

show. There are eight stories the theatre currently performs, about the khaen, Fa Ngum, Xieng Mieng, the Mekong River, the Khan River, Ai Tongkuang, Phou Si hill, and Phou Thao-Phou Nang. They all are very entertaining and are worth knowing about. The Khaen story describes how the instrument got its name. The story details a hunter and a widow who went hunting deer in the forest, stumbling across the beautiful sound of the Garavek bird, a magical bird. The widow was so enchanted with the sound that when she returned home she tried to make an instrument that could mimic the bird. She was finally successful using small pieces of bamboo, which made a beautiful sound. When the king heard about this instrument, he ordered her to his court and asked her to play it. Finally, he said to the woman, “Kenglai, theua ni khaen dae”, which means “Very Good, this time was better”. The word “khaen” means better, which is where the name of this instrument comes from. This word is local dialect in Luang Prabang. Fa Ngum is the history of the famous Lao king who was born with 33 teeth. Thought to bring bad luck to the kingdom he deport the Khmer kingdom in Cambodia where he was cared for as a son of the Khmer king. At the age of 37, he triumphantly returned home to Luang Prabang to create the Kingdom of Lane Xang and bring Buddhism with him in the process. Xieng Mieng involves two humorous stories: “Ma Konkai” or “Came before the Rooster” and “Tua Phaya Long Nong” or “Tricking the King into the Pond”. The Mekong story involves two Nagas or snake deities that were fighting with each other over some porcupine meat. The fight was eventually stopped by the gods who told them to stop fighting and made them dig two rivers as punishment. One of these rivers was the Nan in Lane Na kingdom which runs through Bangkok and the

other was the Mekong in Lane Xang kingdom. Nam Khan talks about the Khan River. This story has two brothers fighting over a pair of elephant's tusks that their father left for them. After one brother brutally cuts the other in half he could only crawl, crawling into the river giving it its name. "Nam" means river and "khan" means to crawl. Ai Tongkuang is the story of a giant snake that lived where the Nam Khan meets the Mekong. As he was considered a very dangerous snake and stopped boats from passing, he was killed. According to tradition, the big rock in the water where the two rivers meet is his body. Phou Si relates the story of Queen Sida asking the monkey king, Hanouman, to bring her some mushrooms. As the mushrooms were called "monkey ear" mushrooms the Queen was afraid to ask for them by name. After bringing back many mushrooms from the hills of Sri Lanka that were rejected by the queen, Hanouman finally brings back an actual hilltop in the hope that the queen could find her mushrooms there. The hill has stood in front of the palace ever since. If you didn't know, "phou" is the Lao word for hill or mountain, while "Si" comes from Queen Sida. Phou Thao-Phou Nang, or 12 sisters, tells the story of a poor family - a father and 12 daughters. The 12 sisters were abandoned by their father and found by a lady giant who raised them. After finding the giant's heart inside a jar, they decided to leave, moving to King Phouthasen's palace where they were married to the king. When the giant heard about this, she transformed herself into a beautiful lady, married the king, and banished the sisters to a cave, ordering their eyes to be re-

moved. Fortunately one sister escaped and gave birth to a boy, also known as Phouthasen. This boy grew up and married the giant's adopted daughter, Kuanghi. One morning, Phouthasen discovered the giant's heart and his aunt's eyes. He collected them up and set off to return them to his family. His wife Kuanghi, feeling abandoned, killed herself by the Nam Khan river. When Phouthasen returned he found Kuanghi and he too died from a broken heart. Thevada, a god sprite, saw this and decided to keep the couple there forever. So when looking across the Mekong, the legend says you will see two mountains that look like people lying on their backs. The mountain in front of you is called Phou Nang or "girl mountain" and the smaller one on the left is called Phou Thao or "boy mountain". People seem to enjoy the Xieng Mieng stories because they're funny, while the story of Mount Si is also funny and informative. "Unfortunately, there are not many Lao people coming to the theatre but sometimes we've had students come as part of school trips, and tour guides as part of their job. The plays are in English and geared to tourists, so it isn't surprising," Nicholas said. "I've researched a number of the stories in books, and complemented this by speaking to people around town. I also worked closely with the Department of Tourism, Information and Culture," he added. Nicholas also said he would like to offer shows that explore stories about different ethnic groups, such as the Hmong or Khmu. For now the stories vary from day to day and month to month in the 30-seat theatre. They can be seen in a one hour performance running from 6:30pm-7:30pm.

*(Vientiane Times 06 June 2016)*

## Export ban sees timber traders turn to other means

By Editorial Desk

Groups of timber and wood traders seeking to ship timber overseas are hurrying to find channels to move wood out of Laos after Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith issued an order on May 13 banning the export of timber, logs and all forms of unprocessed wood products. The order has made the operations of wood traders more difficult and many traders with stockpiles are now known to be looking for ways to move timber out of the country clandestinely and bypass the ban. The traders know well that the trade in timber and unprocessed wood is now banned but they are still seeking ways to get around the ban. The recent incident that occurred last Thursday in Khammuan province highlighted the lengths that some traders are willing to go to in order to get their wood out of the country. Lao officials found an illegal wood shipment concealed inside what was supposedly a passenger bus after it exploded into flames on the way to the Vietnamese border last week. The bus, registered with Lao plates, but driven by a Vietnamese national, was found to be carrying the large shipment of clandestine timber as well as 14 Vietnamese passengers. The explosion killed 10 people. The vehicle was heading to the Naphao-Chaulor border checkpoint between Laos and Vietnam. This incident is now under investigation. It is expected that this group of illegal wood traders might have been able to ship their products through the checkpoint if the explosion hadn't happened. Checkpoints are a very important gateway for wood traders to send commodities to destinations overseas. Illegal exports along border areas cannot be done comfortably because of the huge timbers involved plus the difficulties of geography so therefore it must involve the complicity of officials. According to the order, it does not allow any checkpoints to facilitate wood exports anymore. Of course, if we launched special investigations and

properly close our doors, the exit of logs, roots, and semi-processed woods out of the country could be stopped. Cooperation among officials in various sectors is key to effectively and successfully enforcing the order. Every sector must have a consensus and go in the same direction to tackle this problem. Of course, it is very necessary to have serious punishment measures for violators, including officials who give facilitation to offenders. Another thing which needs to happen is for Laos to divorce itself from the idea of trading natural resource extraction rights in exchange for development projects. This means that investors develop projects according to the demands of the government and are allowed to fell trees in project sites for export in return. Despite the export ban, timber from the project sites continues to roll out through the borders, which makes it difficult to know what is actually legal and what is illegal. Previous bans have been issued but to little effect because of this same issue. If we continue to carry out such exchange projects, it might increase complexities in society and the control of resource exports will not go in line with the proposals of the government. And of course, people taking opportunities might occur accordingly. Logs cut from projects must be supplied for domestic usage because domestic markets still have stronger demands for materials and the country's furniture factories have highly competitive capacities. Although the government already has the mechanisms to monitor and inspect the implementation of the order, it should open a chance for people in the country to help serve as watchdogs on this issue. The government must use social media as a campaign tool by setting up a Facebook page where people can write about suspected illegal activities, which officials could then make use of in carrying out their investiga-

tions. If concrete measures are taken to actually implement the latest timber ban, I am confident the government can stop the flow of timber out of Laos and keep the country's

natural resources for use here at home.--If you have any comments or wish to contribute an opinion piece, please email: [chanfeat@hotmail.com](mailto:chanfeat@hotmail.com)

*(Vientiane Times 06 June 2016)*

## **Government announces fight against illegal wildlife trade**

*By Times Reporters*

The government has announced that it will put in place stronger measures to combat illegal hunting and trading of wildlife while returning greenery to the nation. Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith delivered the message to mark World Environment Day on June 5 in Vientiane where Laos had organised an event to mark the occasion. The ceremony included tree planting to raise awareness for the environment and contributions to the fight against the illegal wildlife trade and poaching. Mr Thongloun stressed that the government will also impose measures to fight illegal trading of ivory and elephant-related products as well as further regulate the over 200 species of wildlife reported in Laos. The PM highlighted the significance of forests to water and wildlife resources and called for all sectors to protect the country's forests and continue the sustainable development of the nation. Over the past few decades, Lao forests have deteriorated significantly, creating a major threat to Laos' wildlife and the country's environment. Forest cover in Laos stood at 70 percent in 1940, but it has been declining sharply. Currently, forests covered only roughly 47 percent of the country's land area and the government plans to increase this to 70 percent by 2020. The relevant sectors have been instructed to enhance their responsibility in inspecting and managing forests while forestry laws will need to be enforced. Laos is considered home to endangered wildlife as well. About 1.6 percent of the world's wild-

life living under threat is reported to be living in Laos. The theme of the World Environment Day 2016 highlights the fight against the illegal trade in wildlife, which erodes such precious biodiversity and threatens the survival of elephants, rhinos and tigers, as well as many other species. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is calling on everyone to "go wild for life" and take action to help safeguard species under threat for future generations. UN officials underlined that the effects of the illegal wildlife trade including the destruction of natural habitat in which many nations could build healthy tourism industries around. In a similar message, Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Yury Fedotov, said criminal networks and poachers have scant regard for biodiversity, or the terrible impact their actions have on our fragile environment and vulnerable communities. Every country suffers either as a source, transit or destination for these products. UNODC's World Wildlife Crime Report shows that 7,000 species were found in more than 164,000 seizures affecting 120 countries. Laos has enacted a number of laws related to the protection of wildlife; however much more needs to be done when it comes to law enforcement. All sectors will be required to reinforce their efforts to fight illegal trade of wildlife and contribute to the preservation of the country's forests to ensure a sustainable future in Laos.

*(Vientiane Times 07 June 2016)*

## Ministry steps up timber export ban order enforcement

By Times Reporters

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has instructed its provincial departments not to facilitate or grant permission for the export of all kinds of unfinished wooden products, following the government's export ban on the products. Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith issued the Prime Ministerial Order No 15 on May 13 that imposes the ban. In his instruction issued on May 31, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Dr Lien Thikey told the provincial officials to inspect logging fields in the forests, log transporting lanes, log collecting yards, sawmills, wood processing and furniture plants, timber warehouses and other places that utilise wood. Those found engaged in illegal logging and its related activities must be investigated and prosecuted. He asked the provincial authorities to take decisive action to enforce a Prime Ministerial Order issued in 2008 stipulating that all types of forest be closed to logging from June 1-October 31 every year – the annual break to review the implementation of logging quotas before considering the reopening of forests to logging for the coming fiscal year. During the break, logging under all approved quotas, including trees that are needed for the construction of infrastructure and all types of investment projects must stop. The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has prohibited all parties from carrying out logging surveys

in areas such as where infrastructure development and mining projects are planned, but the government has yet to approve the operation of the projects. The minister asked provincial officials to inspect logs gathered in *Sanam II* collection yards and complete the inspection before submitting their findings to the ministry before June 15. In their inspections, officials need to identify the amount of the logs currently remaining in *Sanam II* - a yard where logs have been collected after being removed from *Sanam I*, a log collection yard inside the forest. The information will also include which logs have been sold and which ones have not. The move came after the government instructed relevant sectors last month to inspect felled logs collected in *Sanam II* to ensure that all the wood had been cut in accordance with the government's approved quota. All parties were prohibited from collecting or removing logs from *Sanam I*. Authorities were also asked to inspect the import, trade and possession of log cutting machines and equipment with those engaged in these activities without legal permission from relevant authorities to be penalised. The provincial officials were told to facilitate and cooperate with the government's task force committee in implementing the Prime Ministerial Order No 15.

(Vientiane Times 07 June 2016)

## Laos will upgrade to e-commerce postal service by year end

By Phethphoxay Sengpaseuth

Laos will introduce an E-commerce delivery system as part of its postal service in response to demand from both Lao and foreign customers. L' Entreprise des Postes Lao (Laos' central postal service based in Vientiane) aims to open the e-commerce service by the end of this year. It hopes to improve its service by upgrading from the old system to the new e-commerce system, providing online service, officials confirmed. Director General of L' Entreprise des Postes Lao, Mr Phouvong Khamfong told Lao media after the opening ceremony of a postage stamp on Friday "we need to improve our systems by offering the new service to the public as there are many companies in Vientiane already offering online services." He said of the new system, "customers will receive official information directly from the offices of L' Entreprise des Postes Lao online." The online centre will have information on both the receiver and the delivery service method. "Customers can order merchandise from all over the world including Asean member countries", he said. In 2014, there had been about 50 to 100 people per day who had visited the centre to receive or send merchandise to provinces across the country as well as Asean member countries, he added. He also said that in 2015 after Laos had entered as a member of the Asean Economic Community, the number of people who visited the centre to receive service to and from

Asean member countries and globally, had decreased. A senior official of L' Entreprise des Postes Lao working in customer service said the centre's authorities had concerns that numbers would continue to decrease. Particularly delivery services to Europe and the US because the Asean central postal was currently using the e-commerce system. She also said the Asean central postal service had air, sea, and regional service whereas Laos only worked with the air and regional services. It's estimated that they've taken over 38 to 40 percent of customer targets in the country. L' Entreprise des Postes Lao, created in 1995, is also responding accordingly to policy set forth by the government. Currently, there are 138 L' Entreprise des Postes Lao units across the provinces in Laos. About 80 of those units will have online service access. There are over 600 officials working within the districts and provinces nationwide. It is the largest post office operating in Laos. Other express services such as DHL, Fedex, and EMS operate just behind the Enterprise des Postes building. The office will still offer many of their regular services including money order remittance and payment, courier express delivery, postage paid, and registered letters service. You may also find special stamp collections for sale as well as international money transfers offered via the Western Union counter.

(Vientiane Times 07 June 2016)

## Health sector targets transparent evaluation

By Times Reporters

A health workshop held yesterday aimed to promote cooperation, transparency and openness in data and information sharing across the sector as part of the Joint External

Evaluation (JEE) initiative. The JEE for International Health is a newly developed scheme for improving the assessment of a country's health resources to guaranty clear

evaluation and transparency for preventing and rapidly responding to public health threats or outbreaks in the future, health officials confirmed. Speaking at the opening of the workshop in Vientiane on Global Health Security Agenda and International Health Regulations (IHR), Deputy Minister of Health, Mr Khamphone Phouthavong said that transparency was an important element in order to attract and direct resources to where they are needed most. Recent outbreaks of Ebola and Zika underscore the imperative to improve prevention of, detection and response to public health emergencies, whether naturally occurring, deliberate or accidental. "The workshop has an important role to play to improve the evaluation of the health sector in Laos working with experts from the World Health Organisation to achieve the common and measurable targets of the JEE," he said. WHO Representative to Laos, Dr Juliet Fleischl, said the JEE process had a number of important

features including: voluntary country participation; a multi-sectoral approach by both the external teams and the host countries; transparency and openness of data and information sharing; and the public release of reports. She said the JEE was also an extension beyond the IHR to include two important health agenda, anti-microbial resistance (AMR) and immunisation which were assessed for the first time at the workshop. These assessments will allow countries to identify the most urgent needs within their health security system, to prioritise opportunities for enhanced preparedness, and responses with current and prospective donors and partners to target resources effectively. She also highlighted the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases (APSED 2010) assessment tool, APSED performance indicators and annual national progress report. Since 2007, annual WHO reviews have been conducted on IHR and APSED with WHO partners in Laos.

*(Vientiane Times 07 June 2016)*

## **Laos doesn't suffer from air pollution, officials say**

*By Times Reporters*

Residents in Laos are still breathing safe air because there is no air pollution caused by smoke from industrial plants located in certain parts of the country, according to the concerned officials. An official from the Department of Pollution Control, who asked not to be named, told *Vientiane Times* on Monday that air pollution has yet to occur in Laos. "Laos is not polluted but lacks the modern equipment to inspect the amount of smoke and waste water emanating from industrial plants," he said. The cities in Laos are not affected by air pollution as it is a poor country with not many industrial factories, the official said, while many urban residents living in other cities around the world are breathing unsafe air. However, in other

pollution matters, the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment has confirmed that 10 industrial plants in Vientiane are discharging unclean and untreated water, some of which contains potentially harmful chemicals. These plants were found to be discharging dirty water over the past year, and include animal feed plants. If this pollution cannot be stopped it will pose a danger to the health and daily lives of local people. However, these factories are apparently working to solve the problem. Based on the Voice of America English news last week, a new study from the World Health Organisation (WHO) found that over 80 percent of people living in cities across many countries are breathing unsafe air. The study also reported

that urban air pollution has nearly doubled in 3,000 cities over the past two years. The cities are in 103 countries, of which the most affected are in the world's poorest cities. The WHO warns that as air quality worsens the risk of contracting many diseases also rises. These include stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and breathing diseases such as asthma. Poor air quality is also responsible for an estimated seven million premature deaths every year. Today, the air in the cities of Laos is not bad but members of the public are sick of dust blowing from streets in Vientiane when vehicles pass by, as well as the roads that are never cleaned. The Department of Pollution Control's official mentioned that dust on the roads is a different

matter to air quality. The Vientiane Urban Development Administration Authority aims to maintain and clean 21 main roads and some community streets every week. Some members of the public recalled Thailand recently installing equipment to allow for air quality checks in Laos' capital Vientiane. Thailand's *The Nation* newspaper reported on April 21 that Thailand had installed devices for air-quality checks in Laos, and will make similar installations in Myanmar and Cambodia in a bid to fight the threat of smog. Pollution Control Department (PCD) director-general Wijarn Simachaya was quoted as saying that the installation in Vientiane had already been completed.

*(Vientiane Times 08 June 2016)*

## **Mahosot Hospital still needs oxygenators**

*By Phetphoxay Sengpaseuth*

Mahosot Hospital is still in need of the oxygenators to help in heart surgeries performed at the Lao –Luxembourg Heart Centre. With the increasing number of people who visit the centre to receive surgery and treatment each year, the demands for new equipment also increases. Unfortunately, even after oxygenators had been recently donated by DKSH Laos and the Terumo Company, the center says they still need more. Vice Director of the centre, Dr Monekeo Siphakanlagna, interviewed yesterday by *Vientiane Times* said that this support plays a crucial role in helping heart patients. He said for several years, private entrepreneurs and NGOs including Aid Développement de la Santé de France (ADS), have been the main donors of equipment to the center but there is still not an adequate supply as the number of people with heart problems rises. Those with a family history of heart disease are at risk throughout their life, increasing the im-

portance of preventative measures, he said. The people with heart problems should eat a diet of fish, vegetables, fruit, and poultry and should avoid drinking coffee, beer, and smoking tobacco. Regular exercise is also important for people who already have symptoms of heart disease. However, people at risk should consult a doctor in order to develop a suitable exercise regime. Going to bed early and sleeping deeply for at least seven or eight hours every day is also helpful in assisting the body to keep heart disease under control. While heart disease often fails to display symptoms prior to an attack, there are some warning signs to watch for. Chest or arm pain or discomfort can be a symptom of heart disease and a warning sign of a heart attack. Shortness of breath (feeling like you can't get enough air), dizziness, nausea, abnormal heartbeats, or feeling very tired are also warning signs. According to the World Health Organisation, by 2030 almost

23.6 million people will die from cardiovascular diseases annually – mainly heart dis-

ease and stroke.

(*Vientiane Times* 09 June 2016)

## **Companies failing to replace trees felled during projects**

By Somsack Pongkhao09

All companies carrying out projects in Laos which resulted in deforestation are required to plant trees to offset the loss, forestry officials and researchers have stated. But less than 10 percent of companies in question pursued the country's laws and regulations, causing great loss in forestry resources over recent decades. A researcher from the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI), Dr Palikone Thalongsengchanh, told *Vientiane Times* yesterday that many companies were only interested in cutting down big trees, without caring about Lao forests. "Some companies have carried out projects solely with an aim to cut trees," he said, saying that Laos had lost enormous areas of woodland over the past years devastating ecosystems. Indeed, planting trees is part of the obligations for companies operating in Laos to compensate forest cut down to pave the way for the construction of their projects, notably hydropower, mining and other mega projects. Deputy Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Mr Thongphat Vongmany commented yesterday that laws and regulations related to this matter shall be enforced strictly to ensure all companies fulfilling their obligations. According to the law, those carrying out concession projects which permanently converted woodland areas into other classifications must plant trees to offset the areas lost. Therefore, projects temporarily carried out in woodland areas must plant trees after their projects

ended. Mr Thongphat called for government sectors to take this matter into account before approving investment projects and pledged to collaborate with other sectors to ensure all companies met their obligations. Currently, forests covered only roughly 47 percent of the country's land area and the government plans to increase this to 70 percent (around 17 million hectares in total) by 2020. This year the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry planned to encourage other government bodies and the private sector to plant about 24,000 hectares of trees and reforest over 200,000 hectares for environmental protection areas. Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith also issued a ban on timber exports in a move to minimise loopholes for illegal logging. The government announced forestry closure nationwide to review wood quotas granted in the past year. Forests play an important role in sustaining water supplies, protecting the soils of important watershed areas and in minimising the effects of catastrophic floods and landslides. Most forestry loss is due to slash and burn cultivation, development projects and illegal logging triggered by strong demand for timber in both Laos and abroad.

Dr Palikone said the loss of forests would affect Laos both short and long term given that the country will have to spend large sums of money assisting people affected by natural disasters.

(*Vientiane Times* 09 June 2016)

## Lao hemp product maker eyes foreign buyers

By Times Reporters

Lao hemp products are now attracting more demand from foreign buyers in America and European countries but their makers' ability to supply high volumes remains low because the handmade products always take a long time to make.



Founder of Sisterhood Handicrafts, Ms Noimaniphone Lorbliayao poses with her products at a recent One District, One Product (ODOP) Fair, held at Lao-ITECC in Vientiane.

Founder of Sisterhood Handicrafts, a social enterprise of Sisterhood for Development Ms Noimaniphone Lorbliayao told *Vientiane Times* at a recent One District, One Product (ODOP) Fair that the group was formed in 2012 to promote handicraft abilities of Hmong women from around the country who are currently living in Vientiane. "Hmong women have gained their skills in handicrafts, sewing and knitting since the birth of their ethnic group but many disadvantaged women have no chance to demonstrate their skills for earning basic incomes," she said. Currently the group has almost 80 members and all of them have been given different responsibilities including sewing, knitting and cultivating the hemp trees to be used in production process. "Now, we have more than 100 items of products made from hemp, silk, cotton, and bamboo. These are all made from environment-friendly materi-

als," Ms Noimaniphone said. She said a variety of handbag products, textiles, and other handicraft goods made by sisterhood artisans have been sent to Europe and America, noting that around 60 percent of products were exported to foreign countries. The maximum price of her goods is 320,000 kip per one item and the minimum price is 30,000 kip per item. As a part of this contemporary product collection, sewing traditional Hmong motifs generates income for Hmong ethnic women in Laos. Hemp products in Vientiane are part of the value chain with local farmers in Huaphan province. They are cultivating the young hemp trees to support the handicraft group in the capital. In addition, these women continue to contribute to the cycle of economic and social community growth by training new groups of ethnic women in Laos in business development, handicrafts design, production and marketing. "This year's ODOP fair, we don't expect an increased volume of products to be sold but we want members of the public to acknowledge our products," Ms Noimaniphone said. Despite the fact that hemp products are not popular for today's Hmong women, many small Hmong communities in northern Laos continue the practice of making the traditional pleated skirts made from hemp. So, Sisterhood Handicrafts as a social enterprise look set to promote and generate income for disadvantaged Hmong women by forming a group as a platform to showcase their sewing skills and make incomes possible to earn. "Although the ability to supply the demand of foreign customers is still low, the influx of foreign tourists to Laos, especially Vientiane will open up the opportunity for us to sell more products in the years to come," Ms Noimaniphone added.

(*Vientiane Times* 09 June 2016)

## Rural development centre underway in Vientiane

By Times Reporters

The country's first SaemaulUndong (SMU) training centre for rural development will be constructed at the Agriculture Extension and Cooperation Department in Vientiane.



Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Dr Lien Thikeyo (*fourth left*) and Ambassador of Republic of Korea to Laos, Mr Yun Kang-hyeon (*fifth left*) take part in the groundbreaking ceremony yesterday.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held yesterday in Xaythany district for the construction of the SMU training centre which is scheduled for completion by May 2017. The centre is expected to boost rural development aligning with Laos' three builds devolution directive. Construction of the two-storey building is estimated at US\$4.3 million and includes training rooms, dormitories and an auditorium with necessary equipment and vehicles supported by the Korean government through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA). This is part of KOICA's "Integrated Rural Development Project with SaemaulUndong's Participatory Approach" from 2015-2020 with a total budget of US\$14.55 million. The SMU training centre is expected to be a base camp to encourage and empower government officials and villagers to demonstrate the crucial

roles in community based rural development in 30 pilot villages from the two provinces of Vientiane and Savannakhet.

During the project more than 1,400 people including government officials, village leaders and SMU leaders from target provinces will participate in training at the new centre. The project includes establishing the SMU training centre, linking SMU to three builds devolution directive, plus pilot SMU villages and pilot projects for income generation focusing on cattle raising in Vientiane province and rice value chain development in Savannakhet province. The main aim of the SMU project is to improve livelihoods and increase rural household incomes through SMU's participatory approach as well as to share Korea's experience in rural development. It also plans to give villagers a better understanding of new agricultural technology and agribusiness models for improving productivity and market accessibility through demonstration, participation and practice in the field. During the ceremony, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Dr Lien Thikeyo said the SMU training centre would contribute to rural development, poverty reduction and improve the quality of life of Lao citizens. It would be a base centre for both central and local government officials and village leaders as well as rural communities to enhance their capacity. Ambassador of Republic of Korea to Laos, Mr Yun Kang-hyeon said he hoped villagers could realise their potential and provide significant input for community development as well as successful country development. He also added that leadership from local communities was the key to sustainable development.

(Vientiane Times 10 June 2016)

## Draft regulatory framework for healthcare professionals needed in Laos

*By Times Reporters*

Laos will need a draft regulatory framework to ensure proper licensing among healthcare professionals aimed at assuring the quality of healthcare treatment across the country, officials say. Director Cabinet of the Ministry of Health, Dr Nao Boutta said yesterday during a meeting in Vientiane that a draft regulatory framework for the registration and licensing of healthcare professional in Laos must be presented. The framework would be crucial in ensuring that healthcare professionals use the standards of professional practice and the code of professional ethics and behaviour to guide their daily practices. He said qualifications and standards of practices are recognised by regulatory authorities in Asean and others countries but that foreign healthcare professional practices are much safer than those used in Laos. Doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives and other healthcare professionals' knowledge and skills must be up to date while promoting quality services and improving healthcare and patients safety remains important, he said. Currently, the Ministry of Health has regulations that only allow private hospitals to advertise their name and location. They may not state the number of doctors employed at the facility, where they graduated, or any specialised equipment used for treatment, he added. A senior official from the Ministry of Health also said the Lao government easily gives the green light to the private health sector including health

experts from neighboring countries to continue business in Laos. There continues to be business only for private hospitals, with approximately 90 percent of the private clinics in Vientiane having health services. Unfortunately for the Ministry, they cannot solve these problems as the government still lacks regulation for control in this sector. WHO Representative to Laos, Dr Juliet Fleischl said "I congratulate the Ministry of Health for undertaking the important initiative in developing a regulatory framework as a first step towards the establishing this system in Laos". She said the development of this framework is within the scope of the roles and duties of the Health Professional Council as reflected in Article 63 of the Revised Health Care Law (2015) and also identified in the Strategy on Healthcare Professional Licensing and Registration System in the Lao PDR (2016 – 2025). "A National Registration and Licensing system can help ensure healthcare professionals use the standards of professional practice, and the code of professional ethics and conduct to guide their daily practice", she said. "Such a system can also ensure that qualifications and standards of practice are recognised by the regulatory authorities in other countries and that foreign healthcare workers are safe to practice in Laos", she added. This framework is also particularly important to implementing Asean agreements relating to workforce mobility.

*(Vientiane Times 10 June 2016)*

## China intensifies economic, trade cooperation with Laos and region

By Souksakhone Vaenkeo

China's preparations are progressing well toward establishing a multibillion US dollar Mengla Economic Cooperation Zone in Yunnan province near the Lao border.



*With the Mohan-Boten border gate experiencing congestion from trucks Lao and Chinese authorities are constructing a dedicated goods lane to handle the vehicles.*

The Chinese government announced at the end of last year it would invest US\$31.4 billion in the pilot project in Xishuangbanna - an autonomous prefecture of Yunnan, China's gateway to Southeast Asian countries. The mega project is scheduled to be realised by 2025, Mengla district official in charge of the project Mr Cang Shan En told Lao and Chinese media during a recent press tour to the prefecture organised by Yunnan Daily Press Group. A detailed concept of the project has been submitted to the provincial government for consideration and approval. Investment enticements such as tax incentives are expected to be introduced to lure investor capital to establish business operations in the zone. Investment in the zone will include various industries, trading, and import - export businesses. It was reported previously that the 4,500-sq-km zone was set to welcome investment projects in areas such as transportation, education and energy. Numerous infrastructure projects including an airport and highways will be developed to supplement the existing transporta-

tion system to meet the growing needs of freight and passenger transport, especially once the pilot project is realised. In addition, Mongma border checkpoint where China's Mengla and Laos' Sing district in Luang Namtha province meets is being built to promote greater cooperation in trade and investment between the neighbouring countries. "The border gate will be a convenient trade route from China to Myanmar via Laos," Mr Cang Shan En said through an interpreter. The pilot project, once operational, will supplement the Chinese government's ongoing efforts to intensify economic cooperation with countries in the region. Established in September last year by the governments of Laos and China, the economic cooperation zone at the Yunna's Mohan - Luang Namtha's Boten border area has lured registered capital of more than 100 billion yuan via tax exemptions. Businesses have said the tax exemption provided an incentive for investment and made their products more competitive. "I don't have to pay tax when exporting my products to neighbouring countries like Thailand," said Mr Zeng Li, a representative of the Tian Xin Import-Export Company, who has invested in the Boten Specific Economic Zone in Luang Namtha province, which is part of the Mohan-Boten economic cooperation zone. Congested by increasing numbers of trucks and passengers at the Mohan-Boten border gate, Lao and Chinese authorities are constructing a goods transport lane to ease the bottleneck at the gate, with many trucks en-route to Thailand via Laos. Statistics provided by the Yunnan Xishuangbanna Mohan Economic Development Zone showed on average that as many as 3,100 people and 1,200 vehicles cross through the border gate daily. A representative from Cheng Long International Transport Company Li Sia Long said shipping goods through the Mo-

han-Boten trade route was more efficient as it takes fewer days by land transport from China to Thailand via Laos compared to shipments through sea routes. This was especially important for farm produce which requires on time delivery to ensure fruit was not wasted, he added. Officials said transport via the water route of the Langcang-Mekong

River also played an important part in boosting trade among the regional countries. Businesses and officials said they believed once the planned railway linking China to Southeast Asian countries via Laos was complete, it would significantly boost trade and investment cooperation in the region.

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