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Revue de presse du 27 Juin au 01 July 2016



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

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Luxembourg continues supporting key development sectors

By Times Reporters

The Luxembourg government has forecast a budget of about 60 million euro in ongoing assistance to Laos from 2016 to 2020 to support key sectors of socio-economic development in the country.



Village Development Funds are supported by a LuxDev Rural Development Project in Borikhamxay.

This support concentrated on four sectors: in the health sector, rural development, vocational education, and governance, Luxembourg ambassador to Laos, Mr Robert Lauer confirmed. The ambassador made the remarks on Wednesday in Vientiane at a ceremony celebrating National Day of Luxembourg and the 19th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Lao PDR and Luxembourg. The event was attended by Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Saleumxay Kommasith. Mr Robert Lauer spoke on the growing relations between the two countries over

the 19 years. “We are pleased to see that our long-term engagement has been beneficial to Laos and its people,” he said. Under the overall objective of poverty reduction, Luxembourg had supported the efforts of the Lao government towards the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals as well as toward the graduation from Least Developed Country status by 2020, he said. Interventions supported by Luxembourg are closely aligned with national strategies and policies, with the Lao National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) as a general framework, he added. He explained the establishment, at the beginning of this year, of the Embassy of the Grand Duchy in Vientiane is an expression of the close relations between the two countries. Along with the increasing development cooperation, the Luxembourg community in Laos was also growing in number. Mr Lauer noted that through Lao-Luxembourg cooperation many achievements had been made in health, education, local and rural development, thanks to joint efforts. He assured guests that Luxembourg remained committed to its partnership with Laos noting that official development assistance from Luxembourg had steadily increased. Over the past five years, Luxembourg has invested more than 50 million euro in support to Laos' national development.

(Vientiane Times 25 June 2016)

Irrigation agricultural technology project boosts farmers' knowledge

By Times Reporters

Farmers have improved their methods of irrigation management and technique of rice products after the completion of a joint Japanese and Lao basic irrigation agricultural technology dissemination project recently. The project's assessment meeting was held in Vientiane last week and was attended by the Irrigation Department's Director General, Mr Maykong Phonphommavong, representatives from Taisetsu Land Improvement District (TLID) in Hokkaido, Japan, and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), along with irrigation and agricultural officials of various departments and district offices. The project implemented in the Thangone agricultural flatlands area, Xaythany district, Vientiane lasted for a three year period over 2014-2016 and was funded by both TLID and JICA. Throughout the project, farmers in the target area have learnt methods of water management in the irrigation of rice products as well as knowledge in the improvement of productivity in rice seed selection, planting rice with saved saplings, and labour. They have also learned to increase their techniques in fertiliser use as well as the strengthening of farmers' groups, and soil analysis. However, some agricultural technology improvement activities have not sufficiently benefited farmers as they've had too short of time practicing or problems with the conditions of their rice cultivation. Overall, the project's implementation has received good advice from Japanese experts and the cooperation of local agricultural authorities from Irriga-

tion Department and agriculture and forest offices. The Thangone flatlands irrigation project is one of 31 pumping stations along the Nam Ngum River which was officially established on April 20, 1998, Mr Maykong reported. It is also one of Vientiane's flatland development projects which aim in land cultivation allocation for agricultural products, especially rice, covering five villages, 2,150 families, and more than 9,000 people, he added. This irrigation project began construction in 1971 and finished 1974 through a grant by the Japanese government. Later from 1986-1989 under the Lao-Japan cooperation project on socio-economic development the Japanese government provided more funds for improving and rehabilitating the Thangone flatlands irrigation project for use, Mr Maykong explained. Despite the government's policy to promote and expand irrigated agriculture in wet and dry seasons for agricultural development, it is not yet a model in improving farmer's income as most Lao farmers' still lack sufficient experience and knowledge in agricultural technology. To develop efficient irrigated agriculture, farmers should have knowledge and experience in water management of irrigation systems, rice cultivation care, and rice planting techniques, Mr Maykong says. He believes that the basic irrigation agricultural technology dissemination project has helped farmers and agricultural authorities in the target areas to improve their knowledge of irrigation systems management and rice planting techniques for agriculture development.

(Vientiane Times 27 June 2016)

Traders warned not to sell protected wildlife, aquatic species

By Times Reporters

Authorities have warned poachers, traders and businesses not to hunt, sell or display prohibited or protected wildlife and aquatic species, including live animals, carcasses, their remains or their organs. Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Mr Sommad Pholsena issued an order recently that prohibits all parties from involvement in all forms of illegal activity with regard to protected species. The order relates to prohibited wildlife and aquatic animals identified in List I as well as the protected wildlife and aquatic species named in List II. Restaurants, hotels and guesthouses are also prohibited from offering food that contains any part of these species. Mr Sommad also instructed central and local officials to employ necessary measures to prevent all parties from hunting all kinds of fish and animals from May 1 to October 31 – the annual breeding season. He asked local authorities to assign teams of technical officials to carry out regular inspections in various fish conservation areas to prevent illegal fishing and enable fish to breed. The minister warned all parties against the possession of prohibited and protected wildlife and aquatic animals, their remains or organs, including elephant ivory. Remains and organs are not to be collected or removed from their original habitat for individual possession. The warning came as wildlife and aquatic animals are under threat due to the widespread hunting of wildlife and illegal fishing in rivers. The popularity of wild animals for con-

sumption has driven the price of their meat higher. This has encouraged poachers to continue to hunt prohibited and protected species, which are sold in markets in provinces and the suburbs of Vientiane. An official at the Fisheries Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry said the Law on Wildlife and Aquatic Animals was promulgated many years ago, but enforcement of the law was lax. The official, who asked not to be named, said the law had not been properly explained to local people so many were still involved in illegal trade. Also driving the trade in wildlife is the widespread belief that some species offer special health benefits. This has resulted in many officials getting involved in the illegal trade as well as the consumption of wildlife. The official also said that people in many places continue to use prohibited equipment such as electrical devices to shock fish which they then remove from rivers. Such wholesale destruction of aquatic creatures is posing a threat to riverine populations. In his order, Mr Sommad asked officials to disseminate the Law on Wildlife and Aquatic Animals to a wider cross section of the public to encourage them to observe the law and hand over illegal hunting equipment to the authorities. The minister also warned all parties not to remove or damage any form of wildlife or aquatic animal conservation areas and said those found to be in breach of the ruling would feel the full force of the law.

(Vientiane Times 28 June 2016)

Ministry lowers quota for students of health science

By Times Reporters

The University of Health Sciences (UHS), health science colleges and public health schools around the country will be accepting 1,178 students into their programmes this year in line with the quota approved by the Ministry of Health. This year the quota set has decreased compared to the 1,479 student intake last year, according to a senior UHS official. Around 11,500 students will sit the entrance exams this year, which will take place on July 30. The exams involve tests in mathematics, chemistry and biology. Some 11,300 students took the exams last year and the new figure shows that there is a growing interest in the medical profession. Head of UHS's Academic Affairs Division, Dr Khampasong Setthavanxay, told *Vientiane Times* on Tuesday that the exam results would be announced by the end of August and successful students would begin their courses in the middle of September. Of the 1,178 students accepted, 628 will study 15 subjects towards a bachelor degree and other higher courses at the UHS. The health science colleges in Luang Prabang and Savannakhet provinces will accept 95 students each, while Champassak Health Science College will accept 120 students. The remainder will enrol in higher diploma courses and other programmes at public health schools in Xiengkhuang, Oudomxay and Khammuan provinces. "Lowering the number of students is part of the ministry's strategic plan, and is designed to deliver quality care to improve the health status of all Lao people," Dr Khampasong said. "Another factor is the lack of classrooms and training

facilities for students." Students who enter bachelor degree programmes will take between four and six years to complete their studies. The programme has five majors, namely medicine, pharmacy, dentistry, nursing and medical technology. Dr Khampasong said students who got top scores and came from poor families would be awarded scholarships funded by the government, while other students who passed the entrance exams and were accepted by the university would have to pay for their own tuition. Scholarship recipients will be required to work in their local communities after they graduate. Students who graduate with diplomas will be able to continue their studies to achieve a bachelor degree if they wish. Higher diploma courses take three or four years to complete. The majors include public health, medical technology, nursing, radiology, midwifery, physical therapy, prosthetics and orthotics. Meanwhile intermediate level courses would take two or three years to finish, according to a report from the division. The health institutions offer higher diploma courses in medicine, nursing and midwifery and aim to provide training and education so graduates will be effective in improving the health of communities, especially at the provincial and district levels. Last year, over 1,000 students graduated from the different levels of health schooling around the country, with some of them returning to develop healthcare services in their communities, according to the university.

(Vientiane Times 29 June 2016)

Phongsaly community has improved hygiene, sanitation

By Times Reporters

Over 300 residents of Hadset village in Bountay district, Phongsaly province, now enjoy better hygiene and sanitation after the installation of a gravity-fed water system funded by the United States' Lao Rehabilitation Foundation. The foundation also provided funding to build toilets for a local school, which will further improve sanitation in the community. A handover ceremony to mark the completion of the facilities took place in the village recently and was attended by the foundation's President Dr Luc Janssens, district authorities and other concerned parties. The foundation's Coordinator Dr Phetsamone Indara said the people of this village are very happy with the new water supply which cost around 107 million kip, 30 percent of which was provided by local people. Most of the people in the village belong to the Akha ethnic group and sustain themselves through farming. Hadseth village has 56 households of 67 families who will all benefit from the new water system and toilets. The community is 24km from the district centre and has poor road access. Dr Phetsamone said that now the villagers have clean water and toilets, women and children will spend less time collecting supplies from other villages. The construction of the gravity-fed water system and toilets took several months and were built by a local construction company with the help of the villagers, who also provided construction

materials. The project has worked with the community to develop plans to ensure the water supply is used properly and to build a sense of responsibility and ownership amongst the population. "We now have clean water and toilets, which is much more convenient. We are all happy with this new system and can use the water for drinking, cooking and washing clothes," one local resident said. "We also plan to use the water in the dry season to grow crops and to raise animals such as chickens, pigs, cows, fish and frogs," she added. The National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy, under which all development programmes are implemented, has identified clean water and improved sanitation as one of four development priorities. The foundation now plans to provide funds to construct other latrines for local use, including in schools in the near future, Dr Phetsamone added. Eighty percent of the population now drink boiled water, sleep under mosquito nets, have access to water all year round and are well informed about hygiene. Laos is among the least developed countries in the world, and has a comparatively high degree of poor social and health indicators, according to the World Health Organisation. More than 80 percent of the country's 6.5 million inhabitants live in rural areas, and poverty is overwhelmingly a rural problem.

(Vientiane Times 29 June 2016)

French grants help nine Lao associations

By Phaisythong Chandara

The government of France has granted 380,000 euros to nine associations in Laos in the context of providing funds to support Lao civil society (PISCCA). PISCCA is the successor of the French Social Development Fund, and aims to improve the living conditions of vulnerable populations through micro-projects implemented by local civil society groups from 2016 to 2018. The grant financing agreements were signed at the French Embassy in Vientiane on Wednesday by the French Ambassador to Laos Ms Claudine Ledoux and nine representatives of the associations concerned. This new funding in support of Lao civil society is one of the cooperation tools used by France to contribute to Laos' development objectives, according to a statement from the French Embassy. The nine associations have been granted between 30,000 and 50,000 euros each for two years, according to their need. Out of the total grant money of 380,000 euros, the Association for Development of Women and Legal Education based in Vientiane and chaired by Ms Inthana Bouphasavanh, has been granted 40,256 euros. The association works to promote the rights of women while helping them to better integrate into society. It conducts awareness campaigns on women's rights among university students and teachers as well as in Vientiane villages. The Sengsavang Association based in Savannakhet province, chaired by Ms Virith-Khattignavong, has been granted 50,000 euros. The association advocates for women's rights and fights against the trafficking of girls. It runs a project to improve the living

conditions of girls who have been victims of trafficking or are at risk of being so, through the management of a centre for rehabilitation and training. The Ecotourism Association Konglor Natane, chaired by Mr Saly Thongsavanh, has been granted 42,000 euros to support ecotourism development in Konglor and Natane villages near the Konglor-Natane cave. The supported project aims to involve the local population in developing income-generating activities such as sports, and craft workshops conducted by women's groups. The Association for People Living with Epilepsy in Laos, chaired by Ms Somchit Vorachit, has been granted 30,000 euros to fight against the stigma of epilepsy patients and work to facilitate their access to medical treatment. The supported project aims to improve the knowledge, attitudes and practices of health staff, teachers and students with regard to epilepsy. The remainder of the money has been granted to the Support Local Knowledge Association, the Association for the Deaf, the Promotion of Family Health Association, the Aid Children with Disabilities Association, and the Foundation for Assisting Poor People (Vientiane Rescue 1623). The Foundation for Assisting Poor People (Vientiane Rescue 1623), which is co-chaired by Ms Sisaliao Thammatheva and Ms Phouthone Phoumsavanh, has been granted 50,000 euros to improve road safety in Vientiane. The supported project aims to provide a response to road accidents by forming teams of volunteers to provide emergency relief.

(Vientiane Times 01 July 2016)

Violence against women costing US\$13.5 million

By Times Reporters

Resources required for delivering across-the-board support services for Lao women and girls experiencing violence for 2015-2017 has reached an estimated US\$13.5 million, or equal to 2.25 percent of national GDP in 2014. This figure was disclosed yesterday in Vientiane at a meeting to launch the results of a study on the costs of violence against women. The meeting was co-chaired by Acting President of National Commission for the Advancement of Women Ms Bandith-Pathoumvanh and UN Women's Deputy Regional Director Ms Anna-Karin Jafors. The study is particularly timely considering the launch of the first national violence prevalence survey in Laos earlier this year. Having data and evidence on the prevalence and costs of violence and responses were a critical first step for preventing and eliminating such violence, Ms Jafors said. The estimation derives from interviews and data collected from the sectors of Women's Union, public security, hospitals, people's supreme court, and village units in 12 districts of Bokeo, Oudomxay, Khammuan, Savannakhet, Champassak and Saravan provinces who provide support services for women and girls who experience violence. Ms Jafors said there was increasing evidence that the violence faced by women and girls, and the limited enforcement and implementation of laws that existed to protect them, was resulting in significant costs. These costs are born by women themselves, their families, communities and society at large. Understanding these costs in economic terms can help governments to provide a more effective response to the reality on the ground. She high-

lighted the study which examined the costs of providing services to women and girls affected by violence in Laos, Timor-Leste and Indonesia. As such, it aims to provide law makers with critical new evidence to close the implementation gap between policies and practice and ensure that the comprehensive service packages outlined in the National Action Plans and in other key policy documentation were duly planned and budgeted for. "Importantly, this study finds that the costs of delivering a minimum package of essential services for women and girls who experience violence is not prohibitive, accounting for less than a quarter of a percent of GDP for Laos," Ms Jafors added. These numbers pale in comparison with the impact of violence an earlier UN Women's study in Vietnam found that total productivity losses and potential opportunity costs associated with such violence represents as much as 3 percent of GDP. So women and girls who experience violence must have access to high-quality, multi-sector support services, including health, security, legal, and social services - both because it is a violation of human rights but also because it is a drain on public resources that no country can afford to ignore. However, to be effective these services must be closely coordinated and adequately funded. Understanding the costs of providing services for victims of violence can help achieve both of these objectives. That's why they believed the study could play a key part in ensuring adequate financing for SDG 5, the sustainable development goal on women's empowerment and gender equality, Ms Jafors added.

(Vientiane Times 01 July 2016)

