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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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## The public has more freedom to information, Minister says

By Times Reporters

The public has more freedom accessing information than in many other countries, according to the government, with domestic media working to educate on how to better consume information from external media outlets. The Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism Prof. Dr Bosengkham Vongdara made the statement in his address at a meeting held yesterday in Vientiane to mark the 66th anniversary of the foundation of Lao media and publications.



( From left ) Deputy Minister Bouangeun Xaphouvong, Minister Prof. Dr Bosengkham Vongdara and Deputy Minister Savankhone Razmounry attend the meeting.

Deputy Ministers of Information, Culture and Tourism Bouangeun Xaphouvong and Savankhone Razmounry, editors, members of media outlets and media representatives from various organisations attended the meeting where the floor was opened to all attendees. “Our people have much more freedom accessing media as they are allowed to access all media outlets around the world,” Prof. Dr Bosengkham said. The minister pointed to the more than 40 foreign TV channels, including CNN, the BBC and others, that people in the country can watch through official provisions from cable and digital TV business operators, saying that he was pleased that people who know English, French, Japanese, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai and other languages are able to watch channels of their preference. Prof. Dr Bosengkham referred to some countries where foreign media channels including TV

and some websites are prohibited to the general public while that prohibition was not found in Laos. Aside from foreign TV channels provided by cable and digital TV business operators, people can also access any foreign TV channel through their own private satellite dishes. People across the country are also fully permitted to access information and any media, including social media and social networking sites through their smart phones, where undesirable phenomena also appeared aside from useful features. “We don’t bar the access but want our domestic media to advise and educate members of the public to have judgment in the consumption of information from foreign media,” the minister said. “Our media has the obligation to educate the public, clarifying what is right and what is wrong. There’s lots of undesirable conduct through the media. We granted freedom and we have to give instruction,” Prof. Dr Bosengkham stressed on the obligation of the domestic media. He praised the success made by Lao media in the recent past and called to expand their achievements, especially the fight against undesirable conduct and corruption. Lao media has personnel of around 3,000, of whom 35 percent are women. The minister remarked on the domestic media, saying it had become the “real people’s media”. Meanwhile he mentioned work still yet to be implemented in hosting the meeting of the “Social-Cultural pillar” in preparation to the upcoming Asean Summits in Vientiane. Other important work, according to the minister, included the amendment of the Media Law, and other regulations to facilitate the successful development of media in the country, especially in the conjunction with the implementation of the Sam Sang (Three Builds) initiative, with another set of regulations needed to facilitate work at the provincial and district levels.

## Bridge inundated, national road cut as Oudomxay hit by flooding rains

By Khonesavanh Latsaphao

Road access was cut off to Oudomxay's provincial townships in Houn and Pakbaeng districts on Friday after a link road was submerged by flood waters at 11 am. An official from the Administration Office in Xay district Mrs Khonemany Xayatham, told *Vientiane Times* that the flood was in a section of the National Road 2W on the Vanglam bridge in Houn district located between the Xay district and Pakbaeng district.



*A bridge is submerged by flood waters on the National Road 2W after heavy rains hit Oudomxay province.*

Torrential rain fell across Oudomxay from early morning and it was still raining at about 1:30 pm. Mrs Khonemany mentioned that she was quite shocked when she saw some photos posted on social media site Facebook by people in Houn district at 11:00 am. "I haven't seen such a flood impacting this bridge like this before, floodwaters are too high and I could not see the Vanglam bridge on the National Road 2W," she said. The bridge is 10 metres high. Previously, it was impacted in heavy rain but vehicles could pass because levels were lower

and waters receded rapidly. The next opportunity to traverse the bridge depends on weather, with expectations of some 4.5 hours for waters to recede following a break in rainfall. However, further rainfall Friday could see road users offered little choice but to wait to try to cross the bridge again on Saturday. The Vanglam bridge is located about three kilometres from Houn district on the way to the province town in Xay district. However, current situation with the floodwaters at the bridge mean people living nearby are taking the risk of traversing the swollen river with long boats. Mrs Khonemany added that Kham River near the town of Houn district is also rising with higher levels and sediment rich red water spotted at about 1 pm. Some parts of town may face inundation if the area has rain overnight and continuing into the following day. This is the first flood on the bridge this year after the rainy season started in June. On the same day, some villages in Nan district of Luang Prabang province and Hongsa district in Xayaboury province also overflowed. In April, storms caused damage in Luang Prabang, Khammuan and Oudomxay provinces. In Luang Prabang, three people died after storms hit several parts of the province. Provincial authorities reported that a person on a boat died when the craft sank while it was moored on the Mekong riverbank in Luang Prabang. Another person was electrocuted in Pakxaeng district when a tree branch toppled an electricity pole, while a third died in Ngoy district after being struck by lightning.

## Education ministry ponders nation's first E-library

*By Times Reporters*

Aide et Action Laos, together with Ministry of Education and Sports officials recently exchanged and studied lessons learnt about using ICT with Aide et Action Cambodia to improve the quality of education. Head of Programme at Aide et Action Laos (AEA Lao), Mr Khavi Homsombath said the purpose of the visit was to study how to develop an E-library application with the Aide et Action Cambodian team in order to pilot a project in Laos. Apart from learning about the technical parts of its application, AEA Lao and ministry officials also joined a field trip to inspect project implementation in communities and targeted schools. He also stressed the aim of the visit was to learn more about success factors and challenges in order to reapply them to the implementation plan when the project is piloted in Laos in the near future. Technology has become essential to daily life, especially in education. Aide et Action has valued the importance of this phenomenon, focusing on developing solutions to ensure that all children will have equal opportunity to access education. Aide et Action Cambodia has pioneered the application of ICT innovation to develop literacy, teaching and learning in Cambodia since last year. This project is called Khmer Learn and has three objectives: To improve literacy and build a reading and learning culture among 44,400 children aged 3-11 years nationwide through the pilot and expansion of an award-winning e-learning application: The Khmer Library; To increase the volume and quality of e-books and other learning content avail-

able in Cambodia by creating online spaces for authors to produce, peer-review and make available their own content, and; To strengthen the capacity of 1,656 pre-school and primary school teachers to deliver quality education to students at disadvantaged schools in Cambodia through the use of mobile technology-enabled training and support. Khmer Learn was first piloted in March this year and has made a huge impact on communities. Currently, the project has successfully trained 30 teachers on how to use ICT tools for education. Moreover, 1,560 students can have access to reading materials online. The organisation was also able to distribute tablets and renovate classrooms and libraries in 11 schools. More than 50 pieces of educational content have been successfully produced, plus, there are more than 1,200 active users using the Khmer E-Library application each week. Aide et Action International (AEAI) is an international NGO headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland beginning programmes in India in 1981 and is now working in more than 20 countries across Africa, the Caribbean, Europe, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and China to support sustainable education projects. Aide et Action has been working in partnership with Lao authorities, particularly the Ministry of Education and Sports, and local partners since 2004, playing an important role in helping the government achieve the Education for All National Plan of Action 2003-2015 and the National Education Quality Standards (NEQS) for primary schools.

*(Vientiane Times 13 August 2016)*

## Lao Airlines becomes a full member of IATA

By Times Reporters

Lao Airlines, the flag carrier of the Lao PDR, has joined as a full member of International Air Transport Association (IATA) that helps to promote safety, cooperation and trade between airline members and facilitate smooth movements of passengers and cargo.



Mr Conrad Clifford presents the IATA certificate to Dr Somphone Douangdara (right).

The formal admission ceremony was held on Wednesday and attended by Deputy Minister of Public Works and Transport Ms Vilaykham Phosalath, Deputy Minister and Deputy Head of Prime Minister's Office Mr Khamlavanh Chanthalavanh, President of Lao Airlines Dr Somphone Douangdara, Regional Vice President for IATA in Asia Pacific Mr Conrad Clifford, guests and staff members. Dr Somphone said he hoped the airline, customers and employees would continue to reap the full benefits of International Air Transport Association membership for many years to come. He added currently IATA provided benefits of membership to some 265 airlines worldwide. "International Air Transport Association is a trade association of the world's airlines aiming to promote safety, cooperation and trade between airline members including passengers and cargo," Dr Somphone said. "Lao Airlines was ap-

proved to join a full member of the International Air Transport Association and this is our major achievement. According to the association, IATA's mission is to represent, lead and service the airline industry and serves as the collective voice of some 265 airlines from over 117 countries worldwide. The association's vision is to be the force for value creation and innovation driving a safe, secure and profitable air transport industry that sustainably connects and enriches the world, according to the IATA. Their current priorities include strengthening the IATA financial system, reducing cost to industry, developing new technical standards to facilitate innovation and distribution, providing key commercial services and training, improving global safety, protecting the industry's ability to grow sustainably and seeking to avoid further burdensome regulations. Therefore, Lao Airlines had been working proactively in order to meet the requirements of becoming a full member of the International Air Transport Association. In 1978, Lao Airlines began to coordinate and work with IATA to request Airline Code QV and Accounting Code 627. In 2007, the airline started using an E-Ticket system and became a member of the IATA Multilateral Interline Traffic Agreements, Billing and Settlement Plan and Interline Data Exchange Centre. In 2010, the airline commenced utilisation of IATA Clearing House and IATA Currency Clearance Service systems and became a member of IATA Billing Consolidate System. In 2012, it joined the Interline Simplified Interline Settlement (Interline SIS) and achieved globally recognised IATA Operational Safety Audit certification following a comprehensive assessment of its operational management and control systems.

(Vientiane Times 13 August 2016)

## US\$65-million riverside project set to begin construction

By Times Reporters

A US\$65-million-plus Mekong River Integrated Management Project in Pakxe town, Champassak province is set to begin construction at the end of this year, officials in charge of the project have confirmed. The project comprises four components including the construction of an embankment along the Mekong and Xedon rivers which totals over 16 km in length.



A model of the Mekong River Integrated Management Project to be built in Pakxe town.

Other components include the construction of a 2 km road, a 10.6-hectare public park which will be the first one ever to be built in the province, and a drainage system. The whole project is expected to take five years to complete with a total cost amounting over US\$65.6 million. Of the total figure, over US\$53 million is sourced through a low-interest loan from the Republic of Korea while US\$12 million is to be contributed from provincial authorities. US\$6 million is being spent to clear various natural barriers on the project site as well as local people

affected by the project. Deputy Governor of Champassak province Mr Buasone Vongsongkhone told *Vientiane Times* on Friday that the compensation process has now been completed. "We have prepared groundwork for this project since 2011 while sourcing funding to finance it," Mr Buasone said. Champassak provincial authorities also approved three companies from the Republic of Korea last week who will play a role in providing consulting services for the project. A consulting service contract for the project was also signed in the province last Tuesday between representatives from the Champassak Provincial Department of Public Works and Transport and Dohwa Engineering Company and LTEC Company. Mr Buasone said the Korean companies will carry out detailed project design which is aimed to create attractive features for the province. "There are several reasons for operating this project. The first reason is to build the river embankment to protect against city flooding. The embankment will also serve as a place for local people to watch the boat racing festival annually," Mr Buasone said. Another reason, he said, is that the project will serve as a place for local people to relax and attract more tourists to the province. Pakxe is the biggest town in southern Laos, serving as an economic hub for provinces in the far south. There is still no public park for local people to walk or relax in and therefore this project has an important role in changing the image of the town.

(*Vientiane Times* 15 August 2016)

## Lao children continue to face chronic malnutrition

*By Phetphoxay Sengpaseuth*

Laos continues to face a significant development challenge in reducing the high levels of malnutrition that prevail across the country. Chronic malnutrition remains a big problem and the malnutrition rates of children under the age of five are among the highest in South East Asia, with over 40 percent of children being chronically undernourished or stunted. The Minister of Health Associate Prof. Dr Bounkong Syhavong and some 100 participants from other ministries and provincial health departments took part in a recent meeting to address the issue. "We will continue to combat malnutrition problems in the country to ensure that children nationwide can access efficient, safe, and sustainable immunisation services in order to reduce the child mortality rate, especially among children in poor and disadvantaged families." Associate Prof. Dr Bounkong Syhavong said. Deputy Minister of Health Associate Prof. Dr Phouthone Meuangpak reported at the 4th Workshop of the Commission on National Nutrition on Friday in Vientiane that the government is committed to improving health and nutrition, particularly for women and children. "Recently, we approved the new National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan in 2016 to 2020 to improve the quality of healthcare as well as combat malnutrition problems in the country while children in the target group still aren't accessing to the nutrition according to the plan." He said. "Our work takes into account recent mapping exercises on nutrition and is linked to the 8th National Socio-Economic Devel-

opment Plan. We will work to address the root causes of under-nutrition." He added. The latest Laos Social Indicator Survey states that nearly 2 million Lao citizens, mainly women and children, suffer some form of under-nutrition. Stunting is at 44 percent, and affects around 385,000 children under the age of five. According to a 2013 report by the Ministry of Planning and Investment and UNICEF, malnutrition has a huge economic cost for the country. Iron deficiency anaemia and stunting in young children alone brings a loss of US\$99 million per year, and the country loses up to US\$197 million annually. The New National Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan aims to mainstream nutrition into overall national development, and will work across three sectors: agriculture, education and health, and water and sanitation. Targets include bringing down infant mortality from 68 deaths per 1,000 in 2012 to 20 per 1,000 in 2025 and bringing down the maternal mortality rate from 220 deaths per 100,000 in 2012 to 100 deaths from every 100,000 by 2025. Laos also signed up to the Millennium Development Goals in 2000, agreeing to expand efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. One of the measurable indicators under this goal was to halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger. Almost 62 percent of the world's undernourished people live in Asia and the Pacific, according to the report.

*(Vientiane Times 15 August 2016)*

## Lao Holdings revenue growth continues

By Times Reporters

The Lao Holdings State Enterprise (LHSE) expected that revenues from the next six months of operations are set to increase with the government's bottom line to benefit from increased royalties linked to the company's business operations.



Mr Viraphonh Viravong ( centre ) and Dr Somboune Manolom ( left ) chair at the meeting .

First six months of this year, the company has seen some US\$10.37 million in returns on investment, of which US\$8.75 million was derived from the Nam Theun 2 hydropower project, over US\$1.2 million from mining section of the Hongsa Mine Mouth Power Project and about US\$400,000 from other income, LHSE General Manager Dr Somboune Manolom told a first six months of the year review meeting last week. The meeting was attended by Deputy Minister of Energy and Mines, Mr Viraphonh Viravong, government officials from relevant sectors and the company board members council along with its technical employees. From the achievement, the company handed over its obligation of US\$917,568 to the Ministry of Finance, he said. Over the six month period the company had drawn a loan of almost US\$102 million to invest in the Hongsa Mine Mouth Power Project, US\$300,000 for the Xepien-Xenam Noy hydropower project

and US\$2.8 million for Nam Gniep I hydro-power project as well as servicing debt payments for both capital and interest of about US\$2.55 million for the Nam Theun 2, Dr Somboune said. The government received royalties and profit tax of some US\$16.6 million from projects that the company was involved in. The fly ash business associated with Hongsa Mine Mouth Power Project is progressing after infrastructure construction was almost completed, it also reported. There are currently many companies interesting in purchasing fly ash for a variety of uses, of which five companies already signed trading agreements, he said. Until the end of June, the company has sold 2,494 tonnes of fly ash worth US\$10,571, a figure expected to increase in the latter six months. He explained that first six months of the year, the business operation of the company had progressed well and attracted revenue to the government exceeding the target set. Looking to the final six months of the year, leadership provided by government especially the Ministry of Energy and Mines and the company's board member council would likely result in continued positive results, the meeting heard. The company holds shares in some four power projects, the Nam Theun 2 (25 percent) with installed capacity of 1,080MW, as well as 24 percent of the Xepien-Xenamnoy hydropower project (410MW), 25 percent of Nam Gniep 1 (290MW) and 20 percent of Hongsa Mine Mouth Power Project (1,878MW). The Xepien-Xenamnoy hydropower project construction is now 54.64 percent complete while Nam Gniep 1 has progressed to and 42.20 percent, according to the company's figures.

(Vientiane Times 15 August 2016)

## Economic expansion important to boosting Xayaboury living standards

By Meuangkham Noradeth

Economic development is essential in helping villagers have more income and better living standards so the country will be able to reach its poverty eradication goal by 2020.



*Better infrastructure such a roads is one important factor to boost economic development in Xayaboury.*

For the 2015-2016 fiscal year, the economy in Hongsa district, Xayaboury province continued to expand at 9.7 percent. The district covers a total area of 1,626 square kilometres and comprises 34 villages, 5,388 families and 28,516 people, Hongsa district Governor, Mr Khamphet Phommalat said. He added that socio-economic development of communities based around implementing the Party's Three Build (Sam Sang) directive had become instrumental in driving rural development and improving villagers' living standards. The directive was laid down in the Resolution of the 9th Party Congress. It spells out how provinces are to be built up as strategic units, districts as comprehensively strengthened units, and villages as development units. In recent years the government has spent 248 billion kip on 943 projects to boost infrastructure development and promote agricultural production among people in 109 villages of the 51 districts nationwide under Sam Sang initiatives. Mr Khamphet said district officials are endeavouring to merge two small villages to become a larger

community and will build bigger villages into small towns in rural areas. In recent years agricultural production and other services have expanded and local people's living standards are steadily changing for the better. There are currently 30 investment projects with a total cost of more than 192 billion kip. The government has invested in 15 of those projects with a total cost of more than 155 billion kip, with the Lao and foreign private sector covering 6 projects with a cost of over 33 billion kip. Beside this, there are 9 projects for official development assistance with a total cost of more than 3 billion kip. Mr Khamphet said rural development and poverty eradication had been prioritised in the district and 32 villages had set up development funds. Education is also an important factor in developing local human resources and the district has 20 kindergarten schools, 30 primary schools and 2 lower and 5 higher secondary schools. Beside this, the health sector covers 80 percent of the population with dispensaries and many villagers can access clean water supplies boosting development in the community. From 2016-2020, the district will focus on developing Hongsa's tourism potential and to reach this target officials must expand the use of natural resources while balancing socio-economic development and environmental protection. They must also continue grassroots construction and overall rural development to lead local people out from poverty. This includes supporting local production, guaranteeing there is sufficient food and finding work for the unemployed while continuing to implement the Party's Three Build directive. An official involved in grassroots construction and rural development of Xayaboury reported the province was continuing to develop and the number of poor families was declining year by year. Most people in Xayaboury province are farmers so

improvement to agricultural practices will also further reduce the number of poor families. Infrastructure development is also a

priority for the province, including road construction and electricity connections.

*(Vientiane Times 15 August 2016)*

## Landslides follow heavy rains in nation's north

*By Khonesavanh Latsaphao*

Bokeo province road workers are struggling to repair sections of a provincial link between the districts of Paktha and Huayxai after vehicles were left stranded on Sunday evening by landslides.



*A section of the collapsed road linking Paktha to Huayxai districts in Bokeo province.*

A 38 km section of the Paktha to Huayxai road has been cut at four points due to mudslides. Soil slid down onto the road in two locations while it has collapsed in another two places. An official from the province Public Works and Transport Department Mr Somboun Keuthkong told *Vientiane Times* on Monday the landslides had cut off the road on Sunday due to heavy rain that lashed the province since Friday last week. Many motorists and tourists on the way needed a ride back to find somewhere to stay in Paktha district town's guesthouses. Workers started their repairs on Monday but were finding it difficult because of the

weather. "Right now it is not easy for workers on the road because it is still raining. If there is no more rain the road may be reopened again on Tuesday evening," he said. Mr Somboun explained that two sections of the road collapsed adjacent to the flooded Tha River due to the torrential rain in parts of the northern provinces. Road users and tourists can use an alternative road through Xay district and another via Pakbaeng district in Oudomxay province to link to the town of Huayxai district in Bokeo province. The route via Pakbaeng district in Oudomxay province cannot be used to connect with Huayxai district as it is cut off in Paktha district of the Bokeo province. An official from Oudomxay province Mrs Khonemany Xayatham said on Monday afternoon a section of National Road 2W at Vanglam Bridge in Houn district located between Xay and Pakbaeng districts that was flooded on Friday morning has seen vehicles starting to cross on Monday after water receded. She added there had been no more rain and even sunshine again in Houn district on Monday morning. However, some streets in the town of Oudomxay province's Xay district remained flooded following some more rain in the afternoon, but it started to recede by 3:30 pm that day after the rain stopped. About 170 houses in four villages of Hongsa district in Xayaboury province were also flooded due to heavy rain on Friday.

*(Vientiane Times 16 August 2016)*

## Boost economic development, PM urges authorities in Phongsaly

By Times Reporters

Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith has urged leading authorities in Phongsaly to pay attention to socio-economic development strategies in enhancing people's livelihoods after visiting several projects in the province.



*Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and delegation visit the construction site for a new provincial capital in Phongsaly's Bounneua district.*

The PM led his delegation to Phongsaly province last Saturday after completing earlier visits to Luang Prabang and Oudomxay provinces. During the visit Mr Thongloun was provided a report on the province's socio-economic development situation and potentials by Governor of Phongsaly province, Mr Khamjane Vongphosy. Mr Khamjane reported that Phongsaly province has continuously progressed in socio-economic development in the first nine months of 2014-2015, with its economy growing by 9.32 percent and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita reaching US\$840. He said the province approved 77 villages as model development villages, 123 villages as model cultural villages and 13,602 families as model development families. Phongsaly had mobilised revenue of more than 45.98 billion kip, accounting for 90.22 percent of the yearly plan. The province has bolstered friendly relations and comprehensive cooperation with its neigh-

boring provinces in Vietnam and China along with seeking assistance and funds elsewhere to further contribute to socio-economic development. Mr Khamjane also reported progress on the implementation of the construction project of the new Phongsaly provincial capital in Bounneua district. Mr Thongloun visited the building site for the new capital in Bounneua district, the construction project for the Road 1A between Bounneua and Lantui and the provincial hospital. He congratulated provincial authorities as well as local people in their contribution to the country's development and protection, especially provincial socio-economic development. Mr Thongloun urged authorities to pay attention to economic development in a bid to enhance people's livelihoods by considering poverty eradication as priority along with exploration of the province's potentials in processing and agriculture production promotion. Efforts should continue to support the fine culture and harmony of ethnic groups, increase attention to efforts supporting international relations and cooperation to attract more foreign investment into the province, while managing and monitoring government and private investment projects to ensure all agreements are effectively implemented and completed in a timely manner as planned. PM said authorities must earnestly seek to resolve social issues including drug sales, consumption and proliferation. They must also pay attention to work on the provincial capital relocation to ensure the new site will become a modern urban area and a model for urban development in northern provinces and beyond. Those responsible must manage their budgets and minimise expenses in construction and management of the project.

*(Vientiane Times 16 August 2016)*

## Laos hopes to export electricity to Singapore by 2020

By Souksakhone Vaenkeo

Laos expects it will be able to export electricity to Singapore by 2020 as its officials are speeding up talks with the countries involved. Deputy Minister of Energy and Mines, Mr Viraphonh Viravong told *Vientiane Times* last week that talks were ongoing on the project, in which Laos expects to export 100 MW of power to Singapore via Thailand and Malaysia's network. "We recognise the benefits from the Asean power grid – the benefit that would be brought to all countries involved," he said. "It is only 100 MW. It is a small quantity, but we want to show it is possible using the existing facilities. Between 2018 and 2020 we hope to be able to trade with Singapore." He added that officials of the countries involved needed to work together and complete the legal, technical and commercial aspects of the pilot project. Laos, which has already exported electricity to its neighbouring countries, is looking at exporting power to Singapore due to high energy prices there. It was reported previously that Laos exported electricity at a unit price of just over 7 US cents per kwh to Thailand and just over 6 US cents per kwh to Vietnam and Cambodia, while the unit price in Singapore was about 20 US cents per kwh. The deputy minister spoke to *Vientiane Times* during his attendance to the 5th ERIA (Economic Research Institute for Asean and East Asia) Editors' Roundtable under the theme "Turning Vision into Reality for a Dynamic Asean Community" held last week in Vientiane. Mr Viraphonh told the meeting that Asean energy ministers had engaged in talks seeking ways to address common challenges by ensuring energy security, making the power more affordable and ensuring the sustaina-

bility of the sector. To make energy, specifically electricity more affordable, the minister noted there were two key ways of doing so – the development of larger scale hydroelectricity plants and ensuring the interconnectivity of the energy network. In the context of Laos, Mr Viraphonh gave the example of the 1,000 MW Nam Theun 2 Hydropower Project, the construction of which was completed a few years ago. Power from Nam Thuen 2 is sold locally at about two and a half US cents per kilowatt hour instead of about six US cents per kilowatt hour if a smaller-scale hydropower plant is developed instead. Power interconnectivity with neighbours has proven to be the most cost effective method for reducing energy costs. For instance, Laos has exported energy to Thailand, but imports power back for domestic use in some localities which are far away from the existing Lao power grid. This is because the investment for installing long-line networks to every remote community in Laos would not be cost effective compared to making use of the networks of neighbours. The deputy minister added that energy cooperation among countries in the region was crucial given that Laos had high potential for electricity development, thus power imported from Laos would help its neighbours to lessen dependence on dirtier-sourced energy such as coal-fired power. Some 12,500 MW of hydropower from Laos would prevent 30-60 tonnes of carbon dioxide being emitted annually, according to him. According to plans, Laos is expected to develop 10,000 MW of electricity by 2020 and this will rise further to 20,000 MW by 2030, which will be much in excess of domestic demand.

(*Vientiane Times* 16 August 2016)

## **Beware of a rising Mekong this month**

*By Times Reporters*

People who live along the Mekong River across the country should be aware of possible rising water levels this month and other severe conditions due to continued rains and isolated heavy rains. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's Meteorology and Hydrology Department made the warning yesterday. A department official told *Vientiane Times* yesterday that water levels are rising because of heavy rains in northern Laos, which could cause flooding in the lowlands of some districts in Borikhamxay and Khammuan provinces. There will be an estimated 330 millimetres of rain in Vientiane this month, while in Pakxan, Thakhaek, and Pakxe districts there could be between 500-600 millimetres. The official said the department was monitoring weather conditions constantly, and was working in collaboration with the meteorology and hydrology departments in other countries. When Mekong levels increase above 11 metres in lowland areas in Vientiane or other

extreme weather conditions are forecast, we immediately send out warnings through various meteorology and hydrology sectors as well as websites, radio broadcasts, television and media agencies, to let people know what's happening, the official added. The rain around Vientiane capital yesterday had been moderate but there had been heavy rains in Xieng Khuang, Xayaboury and Huaphan provinces. However, there has been limited rainfall in the past month while temperatures have risen above average over the last two weeks in Vientiane, Luang Prabang and Xayaboury provinces, for the past nine to 12 days in Bokeo and Savannakhet provinces, and for the last week in Huaphan, Borikhamxay, Khammuan, Saravan, Champassak and Xekong provinces. Closely following the weather forecast reports should remain a daily responsibility, especially those people who are living along the banks of the Mekong River, the department official said.

*(Vientiane Times 16 August 2016)*

## Malaysia leads top foreign investors in Champassak province

By Times Reporters

Malaysia tops the list of investors in Champassak province during the last nine months of this year which covered 37 percent of all foreign investment in the province.



*Dr Sonexay Siphandone speaks at meeting.*

This was as reported by Provincial Governor DrBounthongDivixay when he and Deputy Prime Minister DrSonexaySiphandone met with provincial authorities in the province on Monday. While second on the list of investors, Vietnam reached 22 percent of foreign investment with third place going to Thailand covering 20 percent of foreign investment, he said. A total of eighteen foreign countries have been investing in the province with 172 projects, worth US\$1,360 million (10,880 billion kip) covering 66.42 percent of all investment in the province.

The plan total domestic investment was reached with 179 projects, worth 5,501 billion kip or 33.58 percent of all investments, DrBounthong noted. Encouraging domestic and foreign investment in the private sector has become one of the most important responsibilities of the provincial authorities, as the number of investors has grown continuously over the past few years, DrBounthong

said. This fiscal year, the province set plans to expand its economy by 8.1 percent, increasing the gross domestic production (GDP) to 12,766 billion kip with an average capita a year of US\$2,263 (about 18.1 million kip). The agriculture sector should increase 2.2 percent, reaching 26.1 percent of the GDP, the industry sector must rise 9.4 percent to cover 34.5 percent of the GDP while an 11.2 percent increase of the service sector or 39.4 percent of the GDP is needed, DrBounthong explained. Over the last nine months of the year, the province has implemented 63.5 percent of plan and he expected that the province will be able to reach its targets. The value of exports over the last nine months reached almost US\$150 million (1,193 billion kip) or 87 percent of the annual plan and had increased last year by 20 percent, while the value of imports reached US\$111 million (about 891 billion kip) or 73.4 percent of the yearly plan. Trade volume between Laos and Malaysia last year reached US\$26.1 million, which was an 8 percent increase on the previous year. While the investment value by Malaysia from 2011-2015 exceeded US\$569 million, ranking the country eighth among foreign investors in Laos at the time. Investment projects usual involve the industrial, mining and energy sectors, according to the Ministry of Planning and Investment. DrSonexay has directed provincial authorities to continue to take their responsibility in leading the economic expansion by increasing coordination in implementation from provincial to local levels. He also stressed to increase cooperation with international affairs, boost anti-corruption measures, to try to collect provincial revenues on target, and to attract more visitors and investors coming to the province.

*(Vientiane Times 17 August 2016)*

## EPF extends support to combat illegal hunting and trading of wildlife

By PhetphoxaySengpaseuth

The Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) has budgeted over US\$ 1 million for two projects aiming to support the combat of illegal hunting and trading of wildlife in the country.



Mr Khampadith Khammounheang ( right ) and Mr BounpaseuthSikounlabou shake hands after signing the agreement.

The agreement was officially signed in Vientiane on Monday between the President of the EPF, MrKhampadithKhammounheang as well as EPF representatives from the two projects. At the signing ceremony was acting Director General of the Customs Department under the Ministry of Finance, MrBounpaseuthSikounlabou. The project known as Timber and Non-timber Forest Product (NTFP) Trade and Law Enforcement will receive US\$568,862 (over 48 billion kip) and will run for four years from 2016 until 2020 focusing again on the combat of illegal hunting and trading of wildlife. Recently there have been a number of laws related to the protection of wildlife enacted by the government but much more needs to be done when it comes to law enforcement, officials reported. The second project known as Customs Capacity Building on Combating Illegal Wildlife will receive about US\$600,000 (around 48 billion kip) and will run for four years as well, from 2016 to 2020 and will focus on building capacity around combating the illegal wild-

life trade in the customs sector of the country. Speaking at the signing ceremony, President of the EPF, MrKhampadithKhammounheang said that these projects aim to improve and promote environmental protection by providing relevant data and information, raising public awareness and providing education to citizens so that they see the importance of the environment in their daily lives. This includes the encouragement and supporting the strict implementation of policies, laws, and regulations on the environment. MrKhampadith said the projects have put in place stronger measures to combat the illegal hunting and trading of wildlife while returning greenery to the nation and have enacted a number of laws relating to the protection of wildlife but that much more will need to be done. The Director General of Combating Natural Resource and Environment Crime under the Ministry Public Security, Pol. Lt. Col KhamfaengVangdeexay says the projects for several years have been using laws of stronger measures to combat illegal hunting and trading of wildlife in the country. He said that despite concerted efforts by officials to prevent the illegal trade in wildlife, the trade in provinces around the country is still flourishing unchecked because authorities still lack the budgets to be effective. The projects play an important role in strengthening environmental protection and sustainable natural resource management including the clampdown on the illegal trade here, Pol. Lt. Col Khamfaeng said. According to the EPF, the fund was established in 2005 as a financially autonomous organisation to strengthen environmental protection, build sustainable natural resources management, biodiversity conservation and community development in the Lao PDR.

(Vientiane Times 17August 2016)

## Public warned to be on alert after Mekong River rise

By Times Reporters

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment's Meteorology and Hydrology Department has warned people who live along the banks of the Mekong River from the north to the south to be on alert due to rising river levels.



*Rice and crop plantings in some districts of Vientiane were flooded yesterday due to the increased level of the Mekong River.*

The warning came out yesterday after the Mekong's water levels increased rapidly and some people's rice fields and crops were flooded yesterday but the situation is still not serious. The department's Deputy Head of the Hydrological Division, Mr Somphanh Vithaya told *Vientiane Times* yesterday that water levels are rising because of heavy rains in northern Laos, which could cause flooding in low-lying areas of some districts in Vientiane and other parts of the country. Mr Somphanh said the division was monitoring weather conditions constantly, and was working in collaboration with the meteorology and hydrology departments of other countries. "When the Mekong levels increase above 11 metres in lowland areas of Vientiane, or other extreme weather conditions are forecast, we immediately send out warnings through various meteorology and hydrology sectors, as well as via Facebook, websites, radio broadcasts, television and media agencies, to let people know what is happening," he explained. Mr Somphanh said the rain around the capital Vientiane had not been so heavy and that the Mekong was

about 9.42 metres deep close to the bank yesterday. However there have been heavy rains in Oudomxay, Luang Prabang, Xiengkhuang, Xayaboury and Huaphan provinces. The Mekong yesterday was about 13.8 metres deep close to the bank in Luang Prabang province; 11 metres in Pakxan Borikhamxay province; 7.28 metres in Pakxe, Champassak province; 10.12 metres in Thakhek, Khammuan province; and 8.33 metres in Savannakhet province. In good news, the water level of the Mekong River in Luang Prabang province had decreased yesterday after flooding in many areas while the authorities are gearing up for recovery efforts. Today, the Mekong is about 10.60 metres deep close to the bank at Km 4 in Vientiane, while it is about 12 metres in Luang Prabang, 9 metres in Savannakhet, 8 metres in Pakxe, 12 metres in Pakxan, and 11 metres in Thakhek. Current conditions are normal for this time of year, and there have also been storm warnings for weather systems coming from the southwest, which will extend over central parts of the country bringing more rain. Mr Somphanh said there will be relatively little rain over the next two days however people who live in low-lying areas along the Mekong River in Vientiane and the provinces of Phongsaly, Huaphan, Xiengkhuang, Luang Namtha, Oudomxay, Bokeo, Luang Prabang, Xayaboury, Xaysomboun, Vientiane, Borikhamxay and Khammuan should still be on alert for heavy rain, flash flooding, landslides and other hazards. Moreover members of the public who are out and about should follow and check the weather forecast information provided by the department. Closely following the weather forecasts is the responsibility of all people, especially those who living along the banks of the Mekong River, Mr Somphanh warned.

*(Vientiane Times 18 August 2016)*

## Powerhouse work to commence at Don Sahong

*By Times Reporters*

The concrete foundations for the Don Sahong Hydropower Project are now being set in place prior to construction. The blessing ceremony for the concrete foundation of the project's powerhouse was held at the project site in Don Sahong village, Khong district on Tuesday. The ceremony was attended by Deputy Prime Minister, Dr Sonexay Siphandone, high ranking government officials from the central and local authorities as well as local villagers. The project has progressed well with great support from the Lao government and other international organisations around the world, the Don Sahong Power Company President, Mr Goh Nan Kioh said at the ceremony. The development of the Don Sahong Hydropower Project will be beneficial for the economy and will not lead to negative environmental or social impacts, Champassak provincial Governor Dr Bounthong Divixay assured. The project will also help to improve the lives of people in the area as they will receive training in agriculture and livestock breeding. Meanwhile infrastructure construction will also help local people access healthcare and education facilities, he added. The project covers the three villages of Don Sahong, Don Sadam and Son Sahang. In the past, local people were restricted to boat travel only whereas after the construction of the access bridges they can now also travel by other modes of transport, including motorbikes and passenger vehicles. Once construction is complete and commercial generation commences, the Don Sahong Hydropower Project will provide direct benefits in the form of royalties, dividends and taxes. It will also increase the electricity generation capacity in the country, provide extra stability in terms of the electricity supply, as well as provide greater capacity for the development of industry,

services and other investments, Dr Bounthong said. He believed that the project will also prove to be an income source for local people working in the tourism sector in the years ahead. The Don Sahong project developers will spend about US\$500 million to complete the dam, which will have an installed capacity of 260MW. This will allow for energy generation totaling some 2,000 GWh a year, with the project expected to be completed in 2019. The project will alter the course of only one of seven Mekong River channels in the area. Only 14 families had to be relocated to make way for the project and they are already living in new houses provided by the company and have received compensation money to assist their families' income earning abilities. The government, especially the energy and mines sector, is trying to develop the potential of the country and provide a clean and sustainable energy industry, Minister of Energy and Mines, Dr Khammany Inthirath remarked. A total of 40 hydropower projects have already been completed and are operational within the country. Together, they have a combined installed capacity of 6,304 MW and generate more than 33,000 million GWh of electricity per annum. To reach the strategic target for 2020, the energy and mines sector is developing and constructing another 35 hydropower projects, which will have an additional installed capacity of 5,000MW and be capable of generating about 27,000 million GWh a year, Dr Khammany reported. Almost 90 percent of the country's households now have access to electricity to assist in their daily lives. Dr Khammany confirmed that the Don Sahong Hydropower Project will prove to be a model project that employs professional techniques and ensures high quality construction in line with international stand-

ards. All works will be carried out by reputable

companies, he assured.

*(Vientiane Times 18 August 2016)*

## **Contaminated food imports victimise local consumers**

*By Somsack Pongkhao*

The huge volume of expired and contaminated products, notably tainted food being imported into Laos, is escalating concerns among local people over their long-term health risks. Relevant authorities have been encouraged to reinforce their inspections to protect the interests of consumers and penalise those contravening the law. Health Minister Associate Prof. Dr Bounkong Syhavong told *Vientiane Times* on Wednesday that health officials in cooperation with other sectors mainly focused on inspecting products at local markets where the majority of food items are offered for sale. The minister described the challenges of his sector in undertaking regular inspections in all locations including stalls along streets where expired products were also found. "We don't have enough funding, equipment and officials to inspect all expired, contaminated and sub-standard food at markets and other stalls," Dr Bounkong said. Health officials warned that consumers will need to take into account the expiry date of products before any purchase admitting there were insufficient inspections carried out by law enforcement sectors on tainted food and other expired products. Just recently authorities in various provinces organised a ceremony to destroy expired products. In Thakhaek town of Khammuan province, authorities inspected 46 shops at a local market and bus station and found 10 items from 24 shops that were expired. The expired items included food and drinks worth several million kip. In June, authorities in this province also held a cere-

mony to destroy out-of-date goods worth over 13 million kip. In Nong district of Savannakhet province, authorities disposed of illegal and expired products worth about 8 million kip. The deteriorated items included tobacco, cosmetics, food and herbicide. Director General of Setthathirath Hospital, Associate Prof. Dr Khampe Phongsavath has warned contaminated or deteriorated food could pose a serious, perhaps even fatal, health risk for the public. Most of the expired or fake products found by authorities are mainly insecticides, cooking ingredients, food, especially frozen seafood, snacks, tea and coffee. Critics say some traders use chemicals on vegetables, formalin in seafood and meats to make them more attractive so customers will buy them. In addition, fresh fruits are also contaminated therefore regular inspections with all necessary testing equipment is required to deal with the problem. Unfortunately, while Lao authorities already have an analysis laboratory, they lack mobile equipment to test in-the-field and fail to enforce the laws by penalising traders who intentionally sell contaminated food. The Ministry of Health mainly works with the industry and commerce, agriculture and forestry, and science and technology sectors in undertaking the inspections. Last year they discovered imported counterfeit and expired products such as frozen seafood, tobacco and herbicides. It was found that some of the products were past their sell-by date and some had been mixed with other products.

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## Flash flooding in LuangPrabang kills woman, damages crops

By Times Reporters

Flash flooding in northern parts of the country including LuangPrabang province has taken one life, destroyed many hectares of rice and other crops and washed away houses and irrigation channels and livestock.



Flash flooding in Oudomxay province has made road travel difficult.

The woman who was killed was identified as Ms Thong of Houyno village, Phonxay district, the secretary of the LuangPrabang provincial disaster management and prevention committee, MsChanphengPhetdara told *Vientiane Times* yesterday. Officials also reported that more than 1,000 families in nine districts of LuangPrabang province were impacted by the recent flash flooding after heavy rain over the period from August 8-15. More than 10 houses were damaged, a tractor and a bicycle were broken and 900 hectares of upland and wet season rice were damaged or destroyed. Some 753 hectares of other crops also suffered varying extents of damage while seven buffaloes, 39 pigs and almost 300 poultry were reported as lost. The flooding also saw damages sustained by irrigation channels, wood bridges and irrigation dams. The worst impacted areas were the districts of Chomphet, Nan, Xiengngeun and Phonxay. It is expected that the loss and damage figures will rise after all reports are

compiled by local authorities, MsChanpheng said. Other northern provinces such as Bokeo, Xayaboury, and Oudomxay were also affected by similar flooding but not all reports have been compiled as yet. Some 139 families in the three districts of Houayxai, Pha-Oudom and Paktha were affected, the Bokeo provincial social welfare section deputy head, MrPhousyLattanaphak reported. More than 200 hectares of upland and wet season rice within the districts were damaged and almost 100 livestock and poultry deaths were reported. Some district roads were also damaged, especially in Paktha and Pha-Oudom, which suffered from landslides and washouts. At present, local authorities are continuing to collect information on the damage in order to seek assistance, MrPhousy said. In Xayaboury province, four villages of Hongsa district were the worst affected. Those were Napoung, Khaenkham, Sibounheuang and Phonsoung, the provincial social welfare section head, MrNouphoneXaypanyachit reported. More than 70 families or 891 people who live along the mountains and rivers have been impacted by recent flash flooding, he said. The heavy rains flooded 170 households, damaged 4.5 hectares of rice, killed 624 poultry and saw 15,000 fish escape from their fish ponds. Roads and irrigation channels were also damaged but there are no estimates on the expected costs as yet. The provincial authorities have already provided initial assistance to victims by handing over drinking water, rice and some necessary equipment, MrNouphone said. More than 2,000 families in 25 villages of Houn district, Oudomxay province were also impacted and over 2,000 hectares of rice, sweetcorn and some cash crops were lost. Baeng district also suffered losses but has yet to report to provincial authorities **By Times Reporters 19**

