

Revue de presse du 12 au 16 juillet 2010

Vous trouverez ci-joint un choix d'articles publiés au Laos en anglais dans le quotidien "Vientiane Times" et en français dans l'hebdomadaire le "Rénovateur".

➤ Le Rénovateur :

- L'Assemblée nationale adopte une résolution sur le régime foncier.
- Plusieurs lignes de chemin de fer prévues au Laos.
- Plus de 10 milliards de dollars d'investissements en cinq ans

➤ Vientiane Times:

- Laos unable to clear UXO within ten years: official.
- Basin management project to regulate river levels.
- Govt tax cuts to promote investment in rural areas.
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- PM praises development efforts in Phongsaly.
- French investment boosts Lao economic growth.
- Wanted Alive: All Lao wildlife species.
- Poverty reduction a priority for Vientiane province.
- ADB to invest US\$15m in clean energy.
- Govt, development partners coordinate future projects.

Bonne réception et bonne lecture,

Cordialement,

Bureau du CCL à Vientiane.

L'Assemblée nationale adopte une résolution sur le régime foncier

Phong Thammavongsa

Au cours de sa 9^e session ordinaire, 6^e législature, qui s'est déroulée du 14 au 30 juin,

l'Assemblée nationale (AN) s'est penchée sur plusieurs questions importantes parmi lesquelles le régime foncier national, à propos duquel elle a adopté une résolution. Par ce texte, elle invite son comité permanent à examiner, en collaboration avec le gouvernement, les

dispositions législatives et les pratiques relatives à la gestion et à l'utilisation des terrains qu'il y aurait lieu de revoir compte tenu de l'évolution socio-économique du pays et des besoins de son développement, et à s'assurer que les amendements qui pourraient s'avérer nécessaires soient préparés par le gouvernement et soumis à l'AN à sa prochaine session ordinaire. Il convient en effet de veiller à ce que le régime foncier réponde aux intérêts supérieurs de l'Etat ainsi qu'aux besoins des citoyens et des investisseurs. L'AN invite également le gouvernement et, sous son autorité, les administrations centrales et provinciales concernées, à régler un certain nombre de problèmes soulevés par les députés au cours de la 9^e session à propos du régime foncier :

- L'Autorité nationale pour la gestion des affaires foncières devrait terminer l'étude qu'elle a entreprise sur l'ensemble des terres du pays et en soumettre les

résultats au comité permanent de l'AN assez tôt pour que les délibérations de

l'AN puissent être prises en compte par le gouvernement dans la mise en œuvre du septième plan quinquennal 2011-2015. • Les modifications de catégorie, de même que les autorisations de location terrains communaux. • Il convient d'améliorer les mécanismes de gestion des terrains afin que soient évitées en toute clarté les attributions de terrains et les transactions dans les cas où elles ne sont pas permises aux termes de l'article 3 de la loi foncière de 2003, et ces cas doivent être portés à la connaissance des citoyens comme des fonctionnaires concernés. La Cour suprême populaire et le Parquet populaire général devraient suspendre l'examen des litiges fonciers dont l'origine remonte à la lutte de libération nationale et au départ de citoyens lao pour l'étranger et qui sont régis par les articles 73, 74, 75 et 76 de la loi foncière de 2003.

Le Parquet populaire général et l'Autorité nationale pour la gestion des affaires foncières

devraient veiller à rassembler sous la gestion commune de l'Etat ceux de ces terrains qui ont été reconnus comme appartenant à l'Etat par la Cour suprême populaire. L'AN demande enfin à son comité permanent de suivre la mise en œuvre de cette résolution par les différentes

institutions concernées, selon leurs responsabilités respectives.

(Rénovateur 12 Juillet 2010)

Plusieurs lignes de chemin de fer prévues au Laos

Somphavanh Siramath

Le gouvernement lao projette d'étendre le réseau ferroviaire pour faciliter les communications et le transport des marchandises avec les autres pays de l'ASEAN. Le coût des transports des marchandises par le train sera 50 % moins cher que celui du transport routier. De nombreux projets sont à l'étude pour compléter la ligne de 3, 5 kilomètres déjà en fonction du quartier de Dongphosy, arrondissement de Hadsayfong, à Vientiane, reliant le premier pont de l'Amitié lao-thaï. Ce tronçon a été inauguré le jeudi 5 mars 2009 par le vice-Président de la République Démocratique Populaire Lao, M. Bounngang Vorachit, et la Princesse Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, de Thaïlande. Le coût de la première partie du projet est de 197 millions de bahts 70 % de cette somme provient d'emprunts contractés par le gouvernement, les 30 % restants sont un don accordé par le gouvernement thaïlandais. Le maître d'œuvre des travaux est la société thaïlandaise Sermsanquan Construction Co., Ltd. La ligne ferroviaire qui relie le village de Dongphosy, au village de Khamsavat, arrondissement de Xaysetthha, aura neuf kilomètres. L'étude de ce projet a reçu un financement initial de 240 000 dollars de l'Agence

française de développement, puis a été reprise par le Fonds thaïlandais NEDA, et conclue en juin dernier avec un budget de 10 millions de bahts. Le coût de la ligne est estimé à 50 millions de dollars, dont 70 % de cette somme seront financés à partir d'emprunts du gouvernement, et 30 % sont donnés par le Fonds NEDA. Il est déjà

prévu de prolonger cette ligne de Khamsavat à la zone industrielle du kilomètre 21, dans l'arrondissement de Xaythany, à Vientiane. Ce tronçon de 18 kilomètres, dont le coût est estimé à plus de 60,6 millions de dollars, a fait l'objet d'une première étude. Il sera financé par un emprunt du gouvernement lao auprès du gouvernement chinois. Autres projets de lignes ferroviaires en cours : - Luang Prabang – Botén, 530 kilomètres. 70 % des fonds sont empruntés au gouvernement chinois, le reste est apporté par la coentreprise lao-chinoise responsable du projet; - Zone industrielle du kilomètre 20, au village de Thongmang province de Vientiane, 15 kilomètres. L'étude est financée par la société coréenne Sud Seoul Metro; le gouvernement lao empruntera les fonds pour ce projet au Fonds d'EDCF de Corée;- Donedet- Donekhone, province de Champassak, 7 kilomètres; une société coréenne vient de finir l'étude; Un appel d'offre a été lancé pour entreprendre les travaux. D'après le rapport de la réunion ASEAN-Chine, les marchandises transitant dans les pays de l'ASEAN atteindront une valeur de 4 000 milliards de dollars. « *Le développement du réseau ferroviaire au Laos promeuvera le commerce entre les ville, les provinces et les autres pays, a déclaré le Premier ministre de la RDP Lao, M. Bouasone Bouphavanh. Les coûts des transports de marchandises seront moins élevés que ceux du secteur routier. En outre, le réseau ferroviaire facilitera l'intégration économique du pays à la région.* »

Plus de 10 milliards de dollars d'investissements en cinq ans

Somphavanh Siramath

Afin de promouvoir l'investissement, le ministère du Plan et de l'investissement a entrepris une réforme législative. L'objectif est d'encourager et protéger les investisseurs lao et étrangers et d'établir une réglementation stable et efficace d'ici 2015. Cette mesure vise également à promouvoir les créations d'entreprises dans le secteur rural, pour lutter contre la pauvreté. Un rapport du ministère du Plan et de l'investissement mentionne que de 2005 à 2010, le montant total des investissements au Laos a atteint 10, 5 milliards de dollars pour 992 projets. Ces projets d'investisseurs lao et étrangers ont contribué à renforcer l'économie du pays. « *Ces 992 projets touchent des secteurs prioritaires*, a déclaré le ministre du Plan et de l'investissement, M. Sinlavong Khoutphaythoune, lors de la 9e session ordinaire, 6^e législature, de l'Assemblée nationale. Parmi les plus importants, 24 concernent le secteur hydroélectrique (2, 9 milliards de dollars), 111 l'exploitation minière (2, 7 milliards de dollars), 116 les services du secteur touristique (aménagement des sites, hôtels, restaurants), 1, 2 milliard de dollars, 136 le secteur agricole (1, 01 milliard de dollars). Comme vous le savez, le barrage de Nam Theun 2 est en fonction et il permettra à

l'Etat d'encaisser des dividendes de 80 millions de dollars par an, dès cette année.

De nombreux

autres projets vont renforcer l'économie nationale à l'instar de Nam Theun 2. La centrale thermique de Hongsa, qui sera en fonction en 2015, rapportera 110 millions de dollars par an à l'Etat. D'autres projets industriels sont en cours de réalisation, notamment des projets miniers et de manufactures diverses. Cet essor industriel est capital pour l'économie nationale et renforcer le travail du gouvernement dans le programme d'éradication de la pauvreté.

» M. Sinlavong Khoutphaythoune a aussi soulevé le problème du non-respect des clauses de contrats ou d'accords signés par certains investisseurs, notamment dans le domaine de la sylviculture, dans la province de Champassak, où neuf sociétés ont été prises en défaut. « Lors de litiges avec des investisseurs, une commission désignée à cet effet devrait intervenir pour régler le problème, a-t-il ajouté. Le non-respect des termes d'un contrat doit entraîner des sanctions, qui pourraient se traduire par des avertissements ou des amendes

qui serviront à réparer les préjudices, voire par la fermeture définitive de l'entreprise en cas de manquement grave. »

(Rénovateur 12 Juillet 2010)

Laos unable to clear UXO within ten years: official

By Souksakhone Vaenkeo

A senior government official has warned it will be impossible for Laos to clear all unexploded ordnance (UXO) contaminated land within 10 years as stipulated by a convention to which Laos is a party. Director General of the International Organizations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Saleumxay Kommasit, gave the warning at Wednesday's launch for November's First Meeting of States Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions in Vientiane, attended by representatives from the UNDP, international organizations and diplomatic corps.

"It is difficult for us to fix an exact timeframe for when we can clear all 87,000 square kilometres," he told the meeting in Vientiane.

"But we cannot clear all the cluster munitions across the country within 10 years."

The convention, which will come into force on August 1, requires all states party to it to identify and clear cluster munitions-contaminated areas within 10 years, and help affected communities and cluster munitions survivors so they are fully included in society and enjoy fundamental human rights.

It has been understood throughout the negotiation process for the convention that Laos and other heavily affected countries can be exceptions to this, according to the director general.

"Laos will require an exemption," he said.

It is estimated that Laos, as the world's most UXO-affected nation, will spend hundreds of years clearing all contaminated land, which accounts for 50 percent of all cluster munitions worldwide.

"We can't give an exact timeframe for the extension we need to finish clearing the land; we may have to extend indefinitely until we can remove all the devices," he said.

Over the past 14 years more than 25,000 hectares, just 0.28 percent of the total 87,000 square kilometres contaminated by UXO, has been cleared.

The Lao government has shown its active role in addressing the deadly hidden explosives by being an early signatory of the convention.

Laos was granted approval by the UN General Assembly to host the first meeting of states party to the convention, which will run from November 9-12.

More than 700 delegates from over 130 countries and international organizations are expected to attend the event, which will be the biggest international meeting ever hosted by Laos. Officials believe hosting the meeting will help mobilize greater assistance to remove UXO faster.

The convention also requires signatory nations to declare and destroy stockpiled cluster munitions within eight years, aiming to eradicate their use in future conflicts.

(Vientiane Time 10 July 2010)

Basin management project to regulate river levels

By Panyasith Thammavongsa

A scheme to regulate the Nam Theun and Nam Kading river basin in Borikhamxay and Savannakhet provinces is the first of its kind to be introduced in Laos.

The initiative, called the Nam Theun-Kading River Basin Management Project, aims to monitor the quantity and quality of water in the basin to ensure local communities are not affected by low water levels or floods.

Director General of the Water Resources Department, Mr Phonechaleun Nonthaxay, and Director of the Environment Protection Fund Office, Mr Soukkata Vichit, signed an agreement for the project last Friday at the Water Resources and Environment Administration in Vientiane.

The World Bank has provided US\$340,000 of grant aid for technical assistance from 2010 to 2012, with a view to building up the project so it is viable into the future.

“The project will operate in two areas of Borikhamxay and Savannakhet provinces and we are setting up a secretariat to manage the basin in these areas,” said Mr Phonechaleun.

The Governor of Borikhamxay province will be the president of the Nam Theun-Kading River Basin Management Committee under a prime ministerial decree.

After five years, the Governor of Savannakhet province will become committee president, also in-line with the decree.

“The project aims to ensure the water in the basin is used to best advantage and there are no adverse effects on the environment,” Mr Phonechaleun said.

The project will prevent flooding and water shortages by formulating plans to control the water level.

“Water issues are becoming a matter of great concern in many parts of the world. Climate change is affecting water resources and causing flooding, drought, heavy rainfall and sparse rains, so it makes it very difficult for us to evaluate situations that relate to water,” he said.

Mr Phonechaleun said the project would also develop strategies and plans for river basin development.

“We will coordinate with other sectors to effectively manage the use of water. We have to make sure we balance the use of water, whether for agriculture or to generate electricity. If you want to build a dam, you have to be able to release a strong flow of water.”

He said the idea of water resource management was to avoid negative impacts on the environment. This was in-line with government priorities concerning water resource management, whose objectives were to ensure the environment was not compromised.

Mr Soukkata said he wanted officials and authorities to cooperate in effectively managing the project, for the benefit of the environment and sustainable development.

(Vientiane Times 12 July 2010)

Govt tax cuts to promote investment in rural areas

Souksakhone Vaenkeo

To draw investment to poor and remote districts, the Lao government is seeking to introduce customs and tax reductions and exemptions for businesses operating in these areas, a senior government official has said. A newly-drafted Prime Ministerial decree on customs tax exemption and reduction for businesses operating in poor districts, particularly mountainous and remote areas, is being revised after it was tabled at a government meeting in June. A policy maker at the Ministry of Finance told the *Vientiane Times* yesterday that it is still unable to set an exact timeframe for the implementation of the newly-drafted policy. Government spokesman Professor Dr Boviengkham Vongdara had earlier told local reporters that the initiative aimed to draw investment and development into areas where facilities like road transport are tougher. "We want to attract investors to invest in and develop remote areas. Therefore, we need to have an incentive policy in place to support them," Dr Boviengkham said. For instance, he added, the incentive policy could cover reduction of or exemption from land leasing fees, import tariffs and income tax for businesses. However, details must be made clear on how much each business would be rewarded by the newly-drafted incentive package once it is put into practice, Dr Boviengkham said. For

example, investors in businesses such as rubber plantations who fund the whole project with their own capital should be treated differently from contractors taking on government-investment projects such as road construction, he explained. He added that the amount of investment capital involved should also be taken into account. Details of the incentive package will be specified in the final revised version of the draft decree. Dr Boviengkham said the ministry had been assigned to work with the relevant bodies to revise the draft decree and table it again at a government meeting to be held at the end of the month. The scheme to offer investment incentives for businesses in hardship areas is part of government efforts to balance investment and development between rural and urban areas. Areas classified as having a low capacity for attracting investment will be given the highest incentives as specified in the Investment Promotion Law dated July 8, 2009.

In Article 50, Chapter I of Part IV, the law indicates that businesses in areas where social-economic infrastructures are not favourable for investment, especially in mountainous areas, will get the highest level of investment promotion incentives.

(Vientiane Times 13 July 2010)

Vientiane defines areas for foreign investment

Times Reporters

Vientiane will allocate areas where foreign investors can purchase land use rights for real estate development, according to a senior city land official.

Vientiane Land Management Authority Deputy Director, Mr Somphone Khounvilom said yesterday that officials were surveying land in all districts of the capital. The survey will provide one of the main references for the city administration to allocate areas which can be occupied by foreign investors. "The land survey will be completed by the end of this year," he told Vientiane Times.

The move is a part of revisions to a new investment promotion law that uses land use rights as an incentive to promote foreign investment in the country. President Choummaly Sayasone promulgated the Investment Promotion Law in March after it was approved by the Lao National Assembly in July 2009. However, enforcement of the law will not be possible without a prime ministerial decree.

According to Article 58 of the law, any foreign investors who have an investment project with registered funds of more than US\$500,000 can purchase land use rights for real estate development from the government in an allocated area.

Investors will be able obtain land use rights from the government in accordance with their investment time frame, the law states. However, investors can transfer the land use rights to others, as well as using it as an asset to guarantee bank loans and for other commercial purposes.

Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Planning and Investment Promotion's

Investment Promotion Department, Mr Achong Laomao said yesterday that the ministry was drafting a prime ministerial decree to enable the sectors concerned to enforce the revised law.

"There are a lot of details which the decree must clarify," he said, adding that the draft decree would be completed by the end of this year.

He said the decree would define a number of requirements and conditions investors must meet before they can obtain permission from the government to purchase land use rights.

"The government will grant approval for foreign investors to occupy the land if they can meet the requirements," he said.

He added that the government would not allow foreign investors to occupy land anywhere they choose, explaining that some areas would be reserved for Lao citizens only.

Investment promotion policymakers believe that allowing foreigners to obtain land use rights will encourage wealthy people to invest and work in Laos, bringing in money, new technology and jobs for Lao people.

Many countries, including Singapore, have a similar policy of allowing foreigners to own real estate in their country as a means of boosting foreign direct investment.

The Lao government will focus on foreign investment promotion over the next five years, in order to maintain GDP growth at above 8 percent. Continued growth at this rate would enable Laos to remove itself from the UN list of least developed nations by 2020.

PM praises development efforts in Phongsaly

Times Reporters

Prime Minister Bouasone Bouphavanh has advised officials of Phongsaly province to share experiences with counterparts in neighbouring countries to further socio-economic development in the province. The comments came during Prime Minister Bouasone's visit to the province on Monday, in which he also praised provincial Party Committee members for implementing successful development initiatives.

To follow on from achievements in previous years, Mr Bouasone advised provincial officials to continue to search for methods to develop local products and improve education standards in rural areas of the province.

Phongsaly provincial Party Secretary and Governor Khamsane Souvong outlined the province's 2009-10 master plan to Mr Bouasone.

In the first 9 months of the 2009-10 fiscal year, the province expects to achieve economic growth of 7 percent, with the agriculture, industry and services sectors expanding by 2.54 percent, 12.1 percent and 10 percent respectively on the previous year.

Provincial gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is expected to reach US\$461 during the same period.

Agriculture and forestry accounts for 51.2 percent of the province's total GDP, followed by the industrial sector with almost 27 percent and the services sector with just over 21 percent, according a report from the provincial authorities.

For the 2009-10 financial year, the provincial government has approved investment of more than 21 billion kip in 28 projects, consisting of 18 billion kip in domestic investment and more than 3 billion kip in foreign investment. Phongsaly province has seven districts and shares borders with China and Vietnam.

The province is the primary trade gateway between Laos and China. According to a report from Phongsaly provincial authority, PM Bouasone yesterday joined local government officials at a ceremony to declare Mongchao village of Phongsaly district free from slash and burn cultivation.

(Vientiane Times 13 July 2010)

French investment boosts Lao economic growth

By Ekaphone Phouthonesy

French investment has made a significant contribution to the development of the Lao economy over the past decade, according to a report from the Ministry of Planning and IThe latest report on foreign investment in Laos shows that French businesspeople invested about US\$454 million in 68 projects from 2001-2009, becoming the fourth largest foreign investor in the landlocked nation after Thailand, China and Vietnam. French investment was valued at US\$500,000 in 2008, US\$11 million in 2009 and US\$210,000 so far in 2010, the report shows. Lao economic growth has been above 7.5 percent over the past five years thanks largely to private investment, which covers about 30 percent of GDP. Investment in the mining, hydropower and agriculture sectors is currently booming.

Most French investments are in hotels, travel agents, restaurants, import-export businesses, consultancy firms, insurance companies and the banking, agriculture and hydropower sectors.

Electricité de France holds a 35 percent share worth US\$1.4 billion in the Nam Theun 2 hydropower project in the central province of Khammuan. The project will provide about US\$80 million a year in revenue for the Lao government over the 25 years of the project concession agreement.

Secretary General of the French Chamber of Industry and Commerce in Laos, Mr Germain Thomas said yesterday that there were more than 100 French companies operating in Laos, adding that more French enterprises are expected to come in the near future. A group of French businesspeople visited Laos in May this

year to seek investment opportunities and investigate high potential areas such as airport development, mining projects, and traditional medicines.

The group was led by president of the General Confederation of Employers of Small and Medium Enterprises (CPGME) of Rhone-Alpes, Mr Francois Turcas.

According to Mr Thomas, French businesspeople have found Laos one of the most attractive countries in Asia for investment as its national economy is emerging while its market is enlarging and infrastructure is better developed.

This has provided good investment opportunities for foreign businesspeople, including those from France, he said, adding that the small number of foreign investors in the country also makes French businesspeople happy to invest as they do not have to face strong competition.

“Everyone likes to be the first one to invest,” he said, adding that this would give them the advantage to compete with new investors.

One of the main attractions which makes French businesspeople invest in Laos is that many of them fall in love with the Lao lifestyle, Mr Thomas said. French people particularly like living in Luang Prabang, one of two World Heritage sites in Laos, he added.

Laos was a colony of France from the late 19th century until 1953. French buildings in Vientiane, Luang Prabang and other major cities in Laos are the best reminder for Lao people of this part of the country's history.

Wanted Alive: All Lao wildlife species

Times Reporters

The impact of human activity and development in Laos has left 10 reptile and amphibian species, 60 mammal varieties and 27 bird types at risk of global extinction. Water shortages have plagued the country for over 12 months and as a result water levels in the Mekong River recently fell to the lowest point in the country's history. This has had obvious implications for the ecosystems in and around the river.

Authorities are most concerned with the future of the Mekong Giant Catfish, which is facing extinction. The fish's natural habitat and food sources have been destroyed as a result of human activity in the nation's river systems as well as the impact of natural disasters like drought.

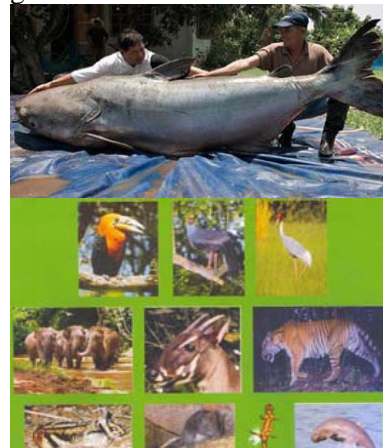
According to Head of the Department of Forestry, Dr Silavanh Sawathvong, National Wildlife and Aquatic Day, on July 13, is set to serve as a reminder of the need to preserve the national ecosystems and implement conservation strategies targeting endangered native wildlife. Population growth in rural areas has significantly impacted the stability of wildlife and aquatic species in the country. Dr Silavanh notes that demand for consumable animal products has outstripped optimal supply levels, and over consumption has resulted in the endangering of native animal species. Compounding the crisis is the prevalence of illegal logging and slash and burn cultivation which are rife in rural locations. These activities have immediate and obvious implications for the animals and their habitats as well as a profound influence on the capacity of wildlife and aquatic species to survive in conditions conducive to successful reproduction and longevity. Yet a failure to address these issues and to minimize the occurrence of these activities remains a persistent setback in the preservation of native species.

Laos houses a diverse range of native flora and fauna. In the protected areas of the country, over 11,000 varieties of flowering plants flourish, including 1,400 variations of the dokphern, more commonly known as the bee blossom. There are over 166 reptile and amphibian species, 700 bird varieties with 150 rare and

endangered classifications, 90 bat species and more than 247 mammal varieties. Amazing wildlife discoveries continue to impress the local and international conservation and scientific communities. Scientists recently discovered the katailai – striped rabbit – and the nuhin – stone mouse - in remote areas of the country, after experts believed them to be extinct for over 100 million years.

In light of such finds, the Department of Forestry and international NGOs are working to implement conservation and protection plans to preserve the country's natural diversity and endangered ecosystems. The department has developed three focus initiatives targeting the protection, conservation and future maintenance of forest lands and wildlife. The strategies aim to educate rural farmers about ways to hunt and make use of the land in the least abrasive manner so as to align the interests of wildlife and local agricultural communities. At present, the initiative is active in 7,300 villages across the country. However, there are issues which complicate the implementation of conservation strategies.

Dr Silavanh said these include the livelihoods of rural populations who rely heavily on the land for subsistence. Poverty plagues these communities and by redirecting their daily activities, their capacity to maintain food security and rise above subsistence living is jeopardised. The department hopes to expand the education scheme with the support of NGOs and their commitment to research and conservation. Of primary concern are the statuses of the saola, tiger, Asian elephant, large-antlered muntjac, crocodile, turtles and giant ibis.



Poverty reduction a priority for Vientiane province

By Panyasith Thammavongsa

Meuangfeuang District in Vientiane province is expected to announce its first development plan next month as part of its strategy to combat rural poverty, according to a local official.

The district's Governor, Mr Somdy Keodalavin, explained that the plan will affect over 400 families across Don, Phol and Namai villages.

The announcement follows efforts to raise the standard of living in village populations.

“There is a focus on permanent employment, healthcare, access to education including vocational skills, family unity, a legal and traditional livelihood and community contribution and solidarity,” Mr Somdy noted. “Our plan focuses on these three villages specifically, however we are looking to extend the strategy if an evaluation proves the success of the initiatives,” he added.

The official announcement is to be made as part of the celebration of the 4th provincial Party meeting being held in September.

Between 2004-2005, there were an estimated 900 families in the district living beneath the poverty line. In 2009 this figure was reduced to 300 families. Measures have been effective but the Governor explained that there are still 6,000 families which require constant support and technical assistance.

In addition to existing families, migration throughout the districts has impacted the poverty reduction strategies.

“We also have to account for 1,530 families from across 16 villages who have moved from the Nam Ngum II hydro power project area to live in new

settlements in Phonsavath village inside our district,” he said.

“Approximately 50 percent of these families were living in poverty and we must commit to lifting their living standards as well.” Poverty reduction is not easy. The district must commit itself to tireless input and activity if the poverty targets linked to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are to be met by 2015, Mr Somdy said

Raising income levels is an important feature of poverty reduction. Mr Somdy noted the importance of cassava plantations in the province which have recently more than doubled in size from 180 to 400 hectares.

“We are focusing on cassava as a source of income and employment for rural workers. Local investment has created this opportunity and we are grateful for this input”, he said. In addition, the district has also planted sweet corn crop for trading ventures. These goods however have been subject to fluctuating market prices which impinges on forecasted profit margins. Similar instability has also plagued the rice harvest and livestock industry, with drought eliminating huge profit margins.

Despite current conditions, agricultural development linked to poverty reduction will be pursued as part of the development strategy.

The district also has the potential to expand its tourism industry. There are magnificent views across mountain ranges as well as caves fit for exploration. The Nam Lik River is also a draw card where tourists can enjoy activities like kayaking and swimming.

(Vientiane times 15 July 2010)

ADB to invest US\$15m in clean energy

By Times Reporters

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) will invest US\$15 million to support clean energy projects in the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS) and South Asia through the Mekong Brahmaputra Clean Development Fund.

The fund will invest in companies engaged in renewable energy, energy efficiency, and water conservation and waste recycling projects. It expects to invest in at least 10 clean energy and environment projects by 2014.

According to a statement from ADB, people in the GMS and South Asia have no access to modern forms of energy. In 2008, 83 percent of households in Cambodia, 80 percent in Laos, and over 50 percent in Vietnam still used wood for fuel, making it critical to increase sustainable energy investments.

The situation is often worse in South Asia.

An alternative source of energy is needed for Laos to reduce the use of unsustainable natural resources.

In an interview with the *Vientiane Times* back in May, Forestry Department Director General Dr Silavanh Sawathvong said that using charcoal and trees for firewood had contributed to the decline of natural resources in Laos. Some small industries in Laos also use a great deal of charcoal in production, he added.

According to ADB, strong economic growth throughout Asia has already put substantial pressure on the region's resources and is straining the environment.

Further development of carbon-based power generation capacity, such as coal

and oil, needs to be carefully evaluated to ensure that access to energy does not come at the price of steadily increasing greenhouse gases, contributing to global climate change.

Experts have stressed the havoc that rising greenhouse gas emissions could wreak on livelihoods in Asia and the Pacific if left unchecked, and urged governments in the region and the rest of the world to find ways to halt or reverse climate change.

“Further economic development in the Greater Mekong Sub-region and South Asia requires greater access to energy. We must help meet this demand for energy in a way that is sustainable and doesn't further damage the environment,” said Director General of the Private Sector Operations Department at ADB, Mr Philip Erquiaga.

The fund has a target size of US\$100 million and will be managed by Dragon Capital Clean Development Investments Ltd., a subsidiary of the Dragon Capital Group, which has longstanding experience in asset management in Vietnam. Other investors in the fund include the Belgian Investment Company for Developing Countries, the Finnish Fund for Industrial Cooperation, and the Netherlands Development Finance Company.

“Private investors and financiers can play an extremely important role in the development of alternative sources of energy in Asia. We hope that ADB's participation in the fund will encourage other private sector players to invest in clean energy projects that will generate both attractive rates of return and a cleaner, more environmentally sustainable future,” said Mr Erquiaga.

Govt, development partners coordinate future projects

By Times Reporters

Government agencies met with development partners in Vientiane yesterday to discuss the implementation of future projects, and the important contributions made by development partners.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of the meeting, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Mr Sitaheng Rasphon said the government of Laos is fully engaged in the final phase of preparing the 7th National Socio-Economic Development Plan.

“This process is important because it will determine both the strategic orientation for each sector and the prioritisation of future investments,” he said.

He explained that the process was dependent on the involvement of all agencies within the related Sector Working Group and their commitment to improving inter-agency coordination and common approaches to development.

“Our sector is asked to make decisive contributions to the national socio-economic development process, by accelerating rural development and reducing poverty while preserving the environment,” he said.

The government sectors attending the meeting included the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, National Land Management Authority, water resource and environment agency and Ministry of Energy and Mines.

The meeting enabled the government agencies to present their perspective, strategies and five-year plan to develop

their respective sectors, as well as discussion on what could be implemented, the involvement of the development partners and aid effectiveness.

The aim was to ensure the priorities of development partners and the government are in agreement, a key stipulation in the Vientiane Declaration. Advisor to the agriculture ministry's planning department, Mr Niels More, said drought was a major aspect to be considered by the agriculture ministry, with a view to making Lao agriculture more resilient to climate change.

“The Lao government has truly understood that climate change is something that is going to happen and they have to get prepared for that,” he said.

Mr More found that there was not enough support for the institutions from development partners, and urged that irrigation development was key to ensuring food security in Laos.

Under the agriculture development strategy there is a target to produce 4.2 million tonnes of paddy rice annually by 2014, and increase the production of meat, eggs, fish and fresh milk at 5 percent annually until 2015.

The strategy also includes an increase of food quantity produced in the 47 poorest districts of Laos by 2015 (350kg per head per year), while produce from the agriculture and forestry sector is to account for one third of total Lao exports by 2015.

The meeting was co-chaired by French Ambassador to Laos Mr Francois Senemaud.

(Vientiane Times 16 July 2010)