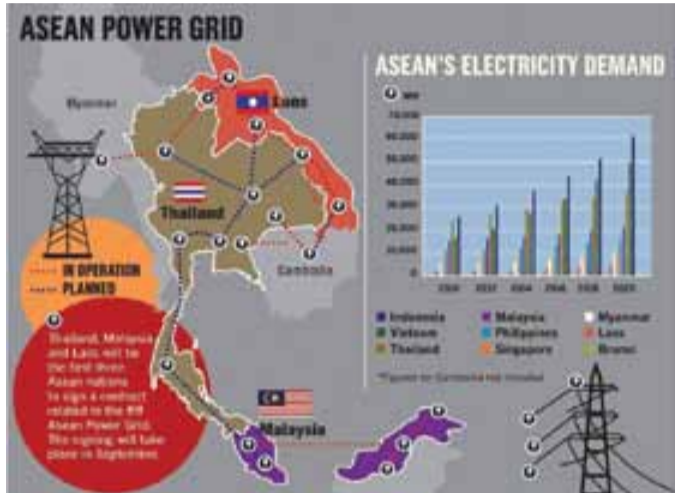


Thailand plans to sign electricity accord with Laos and Malaysia



BANGKOK (The Nation/ANN) - Thailand is preparing to sign a tripartite electricity-trading agreement with two neighbouring countries at the upcoming Asean Ministers of Energy Meeting.

Energy Ministry permanent secretary Areepong Bhoocha-Oom said the agreement would pave the way for the Laos-Thailand-Malaysia electricity deal, enabling the Asean Power Grid to materialise.

"The agreement will be for the sale and purchase of electricity between Laos and Malaysia, using Thailand's transmission system. We will be the link for the two neighbours," he said. "The volume of electricity involved is 100 megawatts."

The concept of an Asean Power Grid was first floated at an informal Asean summit in late 1997. Areepong said this upcoming agreement could make the grid a reality.

The signing of the historic agreement is set to take place at the Asean Ministers of Energy Meeting, which will

be held in Manila between September 17 and 22.

According to Areepong, Thailand has usually signed bilateral contracts in terms of electricity deals. But this planned agreement will involve Thailand and two other nations.

"Laos will generate and sell electricity to Malaysia under the agreement. Laos will get paid for electricity while Thailand will get paid for its transmission," he said.

He added that in the future, Malaysia might consider selling to Singapore some of the electricity it acquired from Laos.

He said he hoped that this power-grid integration by Thailand, Malaysia and Laos would encourage other Asean nations to head in the same direction.

He said there was a possibility of Thailand becoming an electricity-transmission hub, because China has invested in many hydroelectric dams in Laos and Cambodia and has

CONTINUED PAGE 3

PM directs agro development projects in Vientiane province

Times Reporters

Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith and other senior government officials yesterday visited Vientiane province as the government aims to encourage more effective livestock breeding and organic vegetable projects in the province.

As part of the government's effort to alleviate poverty through sustainable rural development, several agricultural and cattle feeding projects are now currently being carried out in the province.

Various agriculture pilot projects are based on the Korean model of Saemaul Undong, a participatory approach to rural community-building introduced in the 1970s.

Saemaul Undong, a Korea Institute for

CONTINUED PAGE 3



PM Thongloun examines a newly-finished woven rice basket at Nayang village, Phonhong district, Vientiane province yesterday.

Ministry orders action to address land disputes, unlawful land occupation

Souksakhone Vaenkeo

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment has ordered provincial and district line departments to take action to address land disputes, unlawful land occupation and related issues.

The order came as increasing numbers of cases involving land issues have emerged in recent years prompting the government to form a taskforce committee

to investigate and address the issues.

Deputy Director General of the Ministry's Land Administration Department Mr Anothai Chanthasay told *Vientiane Times* yesterday that the taskforce committee was required to conclude their works and report their outcomes to the government by October.

It was reported previously that the government has told the committee to inspect land

concessions and the transfer of land use rights in various cases after learning these issues had been causal factors in disputed cases emerging in recent years.

The committee will also inspect the implementation of the government's policy to turn assets into capital, which has seen state departments approaching investors to build new offices for them in suburban areas in exchange for usage of the state lands

where their old offices were located, generally closer to the city centre. The inspection came as reports emerged that many projects implemented under the turning-asset-into-capital scheme were not properly included in relevant socio-economic development plans thus were not approved by the National Assembly.

Additionally, many of these projects did not undergo open bidding processes in

CONTINUED PAGE 3

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Travel industry professionals share experiences on sustainable tourism

Times Reporters

Travel and tourism industry professionals exchanged lessons and experiences to promote competitive, inclusive, and sustainable tourism at the recent 2017 Mekong Tourism Forum (MTF 2017).

Topics discussed at the forum included child protection, heritage preservation, green urban development, women's empowerment, human resource development, wildlife protection, community-based tourism, youth tourism, sustainable investment, and emerging markets, according to Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office.

The Mekong Tourism Forum 2017 was hosted by the Luang Prabang province and the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism from June 5-9 in collaboration with the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office. The theme of the 2017 forum was: 'Prosper with Purpose' and this was reflected by the event's strong focus on sustainability and engagement.

The forum demonstrated that smaller towns without large conference halls can innovatively host world-class events. Luang Prabang's historic district was transformed into the venue, where delegates joined highly relevant thematic sessions moderated by subject matter experts, and these were aligned to the United Nations International Year of Sustainability Tourism for Development.

"This event was truly designed by the industry for the industry" according to the Executive Director of the Mekong Tourism Coordinating Office, Mr Jens Thraenhart.

The keynote speaker at the forum was Ms Anna Pollock, the UK-based founder of Conscious Travel and she remarked that, "It was both an honour and delight to participate in the 2017 Mekong Tourism Forum, one of the best tourism conferences I have ever attended, setting a new standard in conference delivery".

"The 'distributed, inclusive' model maximised exposure to the talent in both the host and delegate communities, and was a brave, novel and constructive initiative, of benefit to many. Combined with the online platform developed for Mekong Tourism, the forum has set a new standard for destination management organisations to follow" she said.

Director of Sales & Marketing at Mekong Cruises, Ms Duanratchada Chimphalee said, "Being able to discuss the issues of river-based tourism right on a river cruise boat on the Mekong River, made the debate not only so much more relevant and engaging, but also offered delegates a chance to experience tourism products away from the traditional meeting room setting".

"We were very pleased to be part of the MTF 2017 hosting community. This new and innovative approach may open up future opportunities for collaboration among the travel industry in Luang Prabang," Ms Duanratchada added.

New water supply operations, maintenance pose national challenge

Times Reporters

The operation and maintenance of new as well as existing water supply systems still poses a major challenge for the water sector in Laos.

In order to achieve the government target of 80 percent of water supply coverage in urban areas in 2020 and 'water for all' in the SDGs by 2030, water supply development in small towns was essential.

This information was stressed during the Project MaWaSU National Dissemination Workshop on Operation and Maintenance in Water Treatment Plants held recently in Luang Prabang province.

The meeting was attended by the Ministry of Public Works and Transport's Director General of Water Supply Department, JICA experts and representatives from provincial water supply state enterprises.

During the meeting Lao and Japanese officials heard about ecological purification systems such as rapid sand filtration treatment and membrane filtration treatment which have been found to be



Lao and Japanese officials discuss the water supply sector.

suitable for small towns in Laos because the essential equipment can be prepared onsite.

An ecological purification system has been introduced at the Champhone water treatment plant in Champhone district, Savannakhet province where slow sand filtering uses mechanical sieving by sand to provide clean water for public use.

Meanwhile, Director of Water Quality Management Centre of Saitama Prefecture, Japan, Mr Hisasi Fukushima noted that "Operational management is to manage water quantity, water pressure and water quality".

For efficient operation, Mr Fukushima highlighted that

equipment should be operated safely and stably with the ability to respond to abnormal situations by using manuals and keeping records.

"Maintenance management is to prevent equipment failure in advance for stable water supply through implementation of daily inspection, regular inspection and regular maintenance," Mr Fukushima added, who is supporting the establishment of model water treatment plants in Vientiane plus Luang Prabang and Khammuan provinces through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Partnership Programme.

During the meeting important operational and

maintenance points in rapid sand filtration treatment, slow sand filtration treatment, cost-effective and safe non-chemical water production methods and other related issues were discussed.

The use of technology in 24 hour operational monitoring to reduce maintenance was suitable for small towns in Laos, the meeting heard.

The meeting is part of the five-year MaWaSU project from August 2012 to August 2017, aiming to strengthen the management capacity of the government in the water supply sector and Water Supply State Enterprises for sustainable and stable water supply now and into the future.

Northern Thai expo pushes SME support, cross-border enterprise

Souknilundon Southivongnorath

Organisers of an expo focusing on products and services from the northern parts of Thailand held a press conference in Vientiane yesterday to promote business cooperation from the region for entrepreneurs in Laos as well as Cambodia, Myanmar and Vietnam (CLMV) countries.

The expo in Chiang Mai, Thailand from June 23-July 2 will focus on showcasing goods and services from Thailand's upper northern provinces including Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang and Mae Hong Son provinces.

The organisers of Lanna Expo 2017 told local press that the expo this year will not only promote local products, tourism and other activities, but it will also help to promote businesses in the region to share, exchange and cooperate with each other for future cooperation.

Director of Chiang Mai Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports Mr Suthon Wichairat said there will be various activities held at the Lanna Expo 2017, aiming to follow in His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej's footsteps and reflecting the lifestyles, identity, traditions and culture of Thailand's upper northern provinces.

"We are focusing on SME products via the motto 'Sufficiency Economy: Following His Majesty's Footsteps', based on Sustainable Development," Mr Suthon said.

On a trip to Vietnam and Laos, he invited all tourists as well as representatives of businesses in Laos and Vietnam to visit the expo to strengthen cooperation between Thailand and its CLMV neighbours.

"We already actively promote these in the country so now we continue to promote them across the region, in particular, the

CLMV countries," Mr Suthon said.

He said the upper northern region of Thailand had benefited from the great merit of His Majesty's boundless and gracious kindness in supporting a revival of the community's livelihood and creation of jobs for villagers through various royal projects.

Participants at Lanna Expo 2017 are eager to continue to realise the wishes of the late monarch and support the principle of sufficiency to drive the economy, increase job creation opportunities and generate income for communities.

Director of Domestic Meetings, Incentives, Conventions and Exhibitions department Mr Puripan Bunnag said CLMV countries would get benefits from the event as those businesses will have the opportunity to connect and make deals for business and trade.

He said the Lanna Expo 2017 is a trading platform that



Mr Suthon Wichairat (left) and Mr Puripan Bunnag respond to media questions during the press conference in Vientiane.

gives an opportunity to the public and interested business operators to gain access to high quality locally produced goods. It is also the first step for many regional entrepreneurs to better understand the needs of the market, to develop their products and services as well as expand their international customer base.

The expo is sponsored by the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau which is continuously seeking

opportunities to expand markets in the CLMV region and beyond.

Outstanding products of entrepreneurs of the upper northern region will also be exhibited in Vietnam and Laos in order to share fine art handicrafts, modern health and beauty products, agricultural produce and processed foods of high standard and assured quality infused with the charm of the region's fine traditions and hospitality.

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One map to benefit natural resources management

Times Reporters

Government and private sector representatives of Laos and Thailand have exchanged information on using a geographic information system (GIS) to build a single map for improved natural resources management.

One map via geographic information system will benefit natural resources management while saving time and budget resources for investment on information surveys and

mapping.

It also benefits communication, sharing and collaboration between government and private sectors, officials in charge informed the meeting held yesterday in Vientiane.

Minister of Science and Technology, Prof Dr Bovienkham Vongdara chaired the meeting organised by Technology and Innovation Department under Ministry of Science and Technology, Thepsymeuang Trading Company, companies

from Thailand and their development partners.

The purpose is to raise understanding and exchange of information development on "one map one community one nation," to build online systems for closer integration between government and private sectors.

The meeting highlighted the role of GIS to enable everyone to easily discover, use and share maps from any device, anywhere and anytime.

The benefits of a single shared map include authoritative data, high-quality mapping, improved visualisations, spatial analysis and models and rich applications.

It also allows greater sharing and collaboration for government operation centres and clarifies administrative boundaries, transportation, hydrology, land parcels, forest boundaries and other topographic features.



Participants join the meeting yesterday.



Tourism officials from the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism pose together at the meeting in Vientiane on Tuesday.

Tourism officials share experiences for sector's development

Times Reporters

Tourism officials of Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism met yesterday to go through the Asean tourism strategic plan 2016-2025 and discuss tourism priorities for Laos, with the aim of attracting more visitors to the country.

The tourism sector is facing challenges after the number of foreign tourists visiting Laos dropped for the first time in 2016.

Last year, just over 4.23 million foreign visitors came to the country - a drop of 10 percent compared to 2015, according to statistics supplied by the Tourism Development Department of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism.

Visitors from Thailand

and Vietnam, the main sources of foreign visitors to Laos, dropped significantly by an average of almost 50 percent.

However, the number of tourists from Australia, Germany, Russia and Italy has increased, although only by a small amount.

To develop and upgrade the tourism sector in Laos, tourism officials of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism discussed the Asean tourism strategic plan 2016-2025 and developed priorities for the sector in Laos.

The dissemination workshop on the Asean tourism strategic plan 2016-2025 for Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism took place in Vientiane and was attended by Director

General of Tourism Marketing Department Mr Sounh Manivong, Deputy Director General of Tourism Development Department Ms Phonemaly Inthaphom, Related Programme Director Dr Hartmut Janus and tourism officials.

The purpose of the one day meeting was for Lao tourism officials to know the direction of Asean tourism work from 2016 to 2025.

The meeting also allowed officials to share ideas to improve development and capacity building on Lao tourism products, and to build links with Asean countries.

The meeting helped tourism officials understand the Asean tourism strategic plan and share new ideas for developing the sector in Laos.

Ministry orders action... FROM PAGE 1

violation of the relevant regulations.

Additionally, Prime Minister Thongloun Sisoulith said recently that a number of fake documents had been produced claiming usage rights of state lands by various individuals and organisations.

The inspection will also find out if local people's lands have been occupied unlawfully as well cases of the inappropriate occupation of proximate state lands by members of such communities.

Mr Anothai said Minister of Natural Resources and Environment, Mr Sommad Pholsena issued several notices giving guidance on how best to take actions to address these issues. "Authorities in charge

will carry out a comprehensive inspection into land issues including the inspection of land registrations," Mr Anothai said.

In his notice issued late last month, Mr Sommad recommended local people facing land disputes approach district offices in charge to seek solutions in line with the relevant laws and regulations.

The minister also called for the district and provincial authorities to collate submissions made by respondents and take appropriate actions to address the particulars of respective cases based on the law.

For those issues which district and provincial departments are unable to

address, the officials are called upon to report to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment or higher authorities to seek guidance and solutions.

Those wanting to submit petitions concerning land disputes to the Ministry's Land Department directly can do so through its reception desk, its petition box or through the ministry's hotline No 1514.

Mr Sommad pledged that the Ministry would work with local concerned authorities to address the submitted issues.

He also told the provincial Natural Resources and Environment departments to report progress made in addressing identified land-related issues to the ministry on a regular basis.

Thailand plans to sign... FROM PAGE 1

approached Thailand about transmission services.

"This presents good opportunities for us. Electricity from Laos and Cambodia can be sold to other nations via our transmission system, if we can connect transmission lines with Cambodia too. As of now, we have already connected the lines with Laos," Areepong said. He said Thailand and Cambodia had planned a collaborative project on electric and water development. Known as the Stung Nam hydropower project, it is the first concrete move since the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding on the deal.

The Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand will invest in this project, because it will buy power produced via

Egat International.

"We believe we can work together in many more projects in the future. We are now negotiating on building a coal-fired power plant in Koh Kong," a province in southwestern Cambodia, Areepong said.

He is also optimistic about negotiations with Myanmar on a plan to develop the Man Tong Dam. "This dam project will benefit both sides. We both need electricity. So we expect the negotiations to conclude well before the end of this year," he said.

Thailand plans to invest in three power plants in Myanmar. Of these plans, the one related to the Man Tong Dam has the brightest prospects. If the ongoing feasibility review rules

in favour of the dam, the hydropower plant in the Upper Salween River will take off with production capacity of 7,000MW. It is expected to be able to generate electricity for distribution by either 2028 or 2029. Areepong disclosed that Thailand had conducted a study on connecting transmission lines to Myanmar's Dawei Industrial Estate. "The Energy Ministry has raised this point with Myanmar. If it wants electricity from Laos, we can facilitate the transmission via Kanchanaburi province," he said. Areepong said that although Thailand would likely be unable to construct more hydroelectric dams of its own, it had a good chance of buying hydroelectricity from neighbouring nations.

PM directs agro... FROM PAGE 1

Rural Development, is supporting an integrated rural development project, which is linked to the overall initiative and Lao rural development policy.

Prior to departing for Vientiane province, PM Thongloun made a visit to the Saemaul Training Centre in Xaythany district, Vientiane to hear about progress of its construction which is now over 90 percent complete.

The centre will aim at enhancing capacities of officials and village leaders on the Saemaul Undong approach, and training of farmers through demonstration farms.

The centre was established under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, with support from the government of the Republic of Korea through the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA).

Following that, the Prime Minister and other

government officials visited the Lao PDR Energy Efficient Data Centre supported by the government of Japan, established under the Ministry of Science and Technology.

Shortly after visiting several sites in Vientiane, PM Thongloun also made his way to Hadxay village in Thoulakhom district, Vientiane province where the Saemaul Undong initiative is being implemented in Laos by an INGO.

In the village, the project has been helping farmers to grow organic vegetables in a shade house along with infrastructure and environment improvements since 2009.

In addition, PM Thongloun's government delegation visited a cattle breeding project at Thinyoung village, Viengkham district which is also supported by the government of the Republic of Korea through KOICA.

Furthermore, a

short visit was made to a rattan furniture factory in Viengkham district and handicraft groups in Nayang village, Phonhong district, Vientiane province which aim to promote local businesses and encourage improvements to household incomes.

At Aekxang village in Phonhong district, Vientiane province, a similar project to boost integrated rural development is also being implemented.

Ongoing activities at this village include improvements to infrastructure, the promotion of a shade house organic vegetable project as well as building a community fresh market.

During his site visit the Prime Minister called on local Vientiane province authorities and other parties to ensure farmers' produce had viable markets as well as ensuring the sustainability of projects so they could continue even after outside assistance had ceased.