Thai princess visits Laos to enhance ties, mutual understanding

Huaphan vehicle caravan expected to grow

NA seeks power to control public debt

**Times Reporters**

Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn of Thailand arrived in Vientiane yesterday for a two-day official visit to Laos, aimed at enhancing bilateral ties between the two neighbours and mutual understanding between the Lao and Thai peoples.

Her visit is in response to an invitation from Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Thongloun Sisoulith, the Lao Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a press release.

The ministry said the princess’s visit will be an important boost in enhancing mutual understanding between the people of Laos and Thailand, and furthering relations and cooperation between the two countries.

Shortly after landing at Wattay International Airport where Her Royal Highness was warmly welcomed by high-ranking Lao officials, the princess visited an ethnic and cultural school for orphans in Vientiane province where she attended the official opening of a computer studies building.

During her visit, Princess Sirindhorn presented study materials and sports equipment to the school.

Later in the day, the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of goods production and circulation, Mr Somsvat Lounsav, hosted a dinner for the princess at the Lao Plaza Hotel in Vientiane.

In the afternoon, the princess paid a courtesy visit to President Choummaly Sayasone at the Presidential Office.

The president, on behalf of the Lao people, expressed heartfelt thanks to Her Royal Highness for the valuable assistance she has extended.

**Soukhriludon Southivongnorath**

A vehicle caravan travelling to the northern provinces from December 11-15, double in size compared to the previous year, according to the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism yesterday.

The ministry arranged a press conference to officially announce the caravan to the public. The main objective of the activity was to promote tourism sites among local people and foreign visitors or foreign residents in Laos.

They said it is also part of celebrating the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and the 95th anniversary of President Kaysone Phomvihane’s birthday on December 13.

The conference reported today that so far about 65 vehicles have joined the caravan and it is believed that this number shall increase to over 100 before December 11, the scheduled date of departure from Vientiane to the northern provinces.

Deputy Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism, Mr Chaleun Warinhrasak said this year the caravan will visit many great activities relating to the celebrations, in particular in Huaphan province, which played a major historical role in the struggle for the independence of the Lao people in the past.

The caravan shall depart Vientiane before passing through Xieng Khuan province on its way to Viengxay district of Huaphan province under the theme “Return to the Birthplace: Glorification to the revolution of Laos.”

Running from December 11-15, the trip will start from That Luang Esplanade in the capital and head up through Xieng Khuang on its way to Huaphan province.

The caravan group will visit the Kaysone Phomvihane Memorial Cave, the Caves of the Government Leaders and join a photo exhibition at Xang-Lot Cave in Viengxay district.

The caravan will then move to Xamneua district in the evening of December 13 to enjoy a traditional arts show by local communities in Huaphan province.

During its return to the capital on December 14, the participants of the caravan will enjoy various other activities and new experiences at the historic tourist sites in Xieng Khuan province before returning to Vientiane on December 15.

Mr Chaleum explained that there will be many great events to promote tourism sites among local people and foreign visitors or foreign residents in Laos.
City authorities JICA confer on development planning

Times Reporters

The 4th Joint Coordination Committee meeting of the Urban Development Management Project between Vientiane authorities and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) experts has reported on results so far and improvements needed.

The meeting in the capital yesterday explained the project’s progress so far, particularly concerning general and detailed land use plans and zoning codes as well as cityscape codes for historic areas.

The Ministry of Public Works and Transport’s Director General of the Department of Housing and Urban Planning, Mr Khambunphanaphon chaired the meeting which also conferred on further actions required.

In his address, Mr Khambunphanaphon said the meeting was based on the principle that the agreement was jointly conducted by the Laos government and JICA between 2010 and 2011.

New e-library system boosts health learning process

Times Reporters

Medical lecturers and medical students have been using a new system for searching and obtaining information on public health and medical research within the Lao PDR and also from elsewhere throughout the world.

The University of Health Sciences has been providing a new e-library system since the E-Library services since the year 2003. Medical lecturers and students hope that the new system will become a valuable source of information and wisdom for them.

People can also use the new e-library system to obtain additional subjects such as diagnosis methods, and construction with an internet connection to obtain further support from community representatives of Vientiane.

The new e-library system is important to Laos for the following reasons. In addition to providing the information on health and medicine, the website also links stakeholders with organisations with an active interest in health in the Lao PDR and these are given on the Useful Links page of the website for further information.

In short, the “E-Library” embedded in the website of the University of Health Sciences (www.uhs.edu.la), the website contains information for medical lecturers and doctors to download PDF files of scientific papers and other information on medicine and health within and outside the Lao PDR.

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Botanical experts on Southeast Asia meet in Vientiane

Most of the state buildings of Chomphet district have been relocated and district authorities have been working at the new town site, which is situated in the two villages of Pholath and Bomlong, for a few years already.

Currently, only the district Public Works and Transport section and district health section are working in the old town because the funds for the reconstruction of these buildings have been cut in the new town area are insufficient as yet.

The new town of Chomphet district as well as a road linking the district of Chomphet in Luang Prabang province to the district of Xayaboury province. The road is currently unpaved.

However Mr Chan said that it is expected the road will start to be improved with asphalt this year, starting from Houayxai district of Xayaboury and then moving towards Chomphet district in Luang Prabang province.

According to Xayaboury provincial Public Works and Transport Department, National Road No. 4B, which links the district of Houayxai in Luang Prabang and is currently unpaved, will be surfaced with a double layer of asphalt.

The government has borrowed more than 766 million kip (over 17 million US dollars) from Thailand's Neighbouring Countries Economic Development Cooperation Agency (NEDA) to upgrade the 113 kilometre road.

An agreement to upgrade the road was signed in Xayaboury province on August 13.

Mr Chan further stressed that, "The brand reminds us about what we need to treasure and what kind of thing that we have. This meeting has been able to share valuable experiences and knowledge to the community in Vientiane and Chomphet districts as it will take less time."

According to the Ministry of Public Works and Transport, NEDA helped with consultation on the survey and design of an additional section of Road No. 11 from the Namsang Bridge in Sangkhong district, Vientiane, to the Nakatsap Bridge in Mekong Bridge in Xanakham district, Vientiane province, a distance of about 150 kilometres.

But he stressed the importance for local stakeholders to take ownership of the brand and to live it in their day-to-day operations.

"The process was surrounded by cultural performances from southern Laos and sought to give a glimpse of the charming nature of the region."

A big list of media tools was also launched for stakeholders to incorporate with their own material creatively. Part of the media package is a new website (www.southern-laos.com) filled with highlights on things to do or see, as well as area for tourism trade professionals.

According to Xayaboury province, the town will have more space for better tourism development.

"The new town was removed from the Xiangnam area on the banks of the Xe Don river. It is the opposite town of Luang Prabang district."

"We moved because there was no more space in the town for the construction of new houses as it is a mountainous site," Mr Chan explained.

Botanical experts from Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam are meeting in Vientiane this week to discuss and report on the success of botanical research in tropical Asia.

The third such meeting was organized by the National University of Laos, Chomphet district, and Vice President of the National University of Laos, Ms. Somchanh said "This meeting will be a platform where local experts and researchers will be able to share valuable experiences and knowledge to the community in Vientiane and Chomphet districts as it will take less time."

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It opened in Vientiane yesterday to discuss and report the success of botanical research in tropical Asia, attended by Deputy Minister of Education and Sports, Ms. Sengdeun Lachanthaboun, and Vice President of the National University of Laos, Assoc. Prof. Phou Rathimol

This meeting is aimed to stimulate tourism development and collaboration in the study of tropical flora. In particular, various botanical research topics will be reported at the meeting, with technical exchange between local experts, researchers and students.

A total of 121 titles including 52 oral presentations will be given by keynote speakers, including 62 oral presentations and 52 poster presentations by researchers from domestic and international institutes.

In addition, there will be a botanical ink drawing master class guided by French regional herbarium practical training, and a best student post-award contest, 165 presentations confirmed.

Speaking at the meeting, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the National University of Laos and a representative of Laos Botanical Research in Tropical Asia, Dr Somchanh Bouphannasy said that this meeting has been eagerly awaited as a forum where recent research results can be presented, advice on plant conservation policy in tropical Asia can be given, and the sustainable use of plant resources can be promoted.

Dr Somchanh said that it provides an opportunity for Laotian researchers to exchange ideas and promote collaboration with foreign experts and researchers. It will also promote Laotian botanical research to be upgraded and gradually brought in line with national and international standards.

This meeting will offer its stage for four days of informative lectures and presentations, productive discussions and opportunities to address some eight fields of research, namely biodiversity, tourism, nature, ethno-pharmacology, photo-chemistry, biodiversity and a conservation and botanical gardens ecological database.

Dr Somchanh also said: "This will be a memorable symposium and we are looking forward to this meeting providing unique opportunity for sharing the latest research, strengthening the research and cross-sectorally, mostly pointing out new tools for better conservation and plant sustainability."

According to the Faculty of Natural Sciences, the first symposium (December 4-5, 2004) was organized by the Museum National d’Histoire Naturelle and the University of Malaysia in Kuching, gathering some 350 participants from more than 20 countries.

There were 57 oral presentations and 60 posters, and a workshop on botanical illustration which attracted about 40 people.

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The new brand “Southern Laos” by nature and culture has been officially launched to promote the four southern provinces of Savannakhet, Xekong, Atupea and Champassak as one destination.

The event took place recently in Champassak province where it was attended by high level public and private sector representatives from the provincial authorities of Champassak provinces, as well as the Ministry of Information, Communication and Tourism.

In his opening speech, Deputy Governor of Champassak Mr. Bounsone Vongskonghonghone said “Like the anniversary of our country, today’s brand launch is about our identity, about who we are, about what we stand for."

The dirt road runs from Xayaboury’s Hongsa district to Luang Prabang’s Chomphet district but is not well maintained, going through mountainous terrain.

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PBM, Interplast provide free surgery in Xieng Khuang

Times Reporters

A medical team led by doctors from Interplast Australia and New Zealand arrived in Laos to provide free surgical treatment for people in Xieng Khuang province suffering from conditions such as burn scar contractures, cleft lip or cleft palate.

The programme, worth a total of US$150,000, is funded by Phu Bia Mining (PBM) and supported by the Women’s International Group (WIG).

The team of plastic and reconstructive surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses from Interplast are working at the Lao-Mongolian Friendship Hospital in Xieng Khuang from December 1-10, 2015. They will also work alongside and train staff from Mahosot Hospital in Vientiane.

During the programme, the WIG provided pre and post-operative assistance to all patients, and financial support to those who travelled to receive treatment.

In 2014, a total of 91 procedures were performed, which included 33 people undergoing reconstructive burns surgery, 13 for repair of cleft lip and 27 for treatment to reduce scarring from burns.

The majority of the 91 procedures were on female patients. Specialist reconstructive or plastic surgery is life-changing treatment for the people in Xieng Khuang province benefiting from the programme.

"The specialist medical treatment has transformed the lives of more than 200 people in Xieng Khuang over the last three years. To mark the 40th anniversary of Laos, the company also extended support to local communities in Xaysomboun province who wished to travel to Xieng Khuang province to receive free surgery. We expect to provide treatment to more than 90 people this year," Mr Chanpheng said. He added that Phu Bia Mining will continue to support Interplast and work with local authorities to address health and poverty.
UNFPA to Laos representative, Dr. Hassan Mohtashami (left) hands over the report on the State of the World Population 2015 to Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment, Dr. Kikeo Chanthabouly (right). The UNFPA also highlighted its new strategy ‘Shelter from the storm: A transformative agenda for women and girls in a crisis-prone world’ on Monday in Vientiane.

Officials from the Ministry of Public Works and Transport and representatives of authorised Toyota dealers in Laos gather for a group photo last week during a one-day driving course in Vientiane titled Safe Driving Education, organised by Toyota Motor Thailand Company Limited. The company’s Executive Vice President Mr Wichien Emprasertsuk, Deputy Head of the Operations Office for the Mekong Division Mr Kumpol Akuneteepun and senior Lao officials attended the event.

A ferry takes vehicles and passengers across the Mekong River between the town of Luang Prabang and Chomphet district in Luang Prabang province.

Tourists listen attentively as a guide explains the history of some of the landmarks in Luang Prabang.
Afghanistan seeks united anti-terror approach at Heart of Asia conference

ISLAMABAD (Xinhua) -- Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Sayed Mohammad Panjah Ali Aziz stressed on Tuesday called for a united and collective approach to countering terrorism and violent extremism at the meeting of senior officials of the Heart region -- Islamabad Process.

Karzai is leading Afghanistan in the day-long meeting of the senior officials that will finalise the agenda for the ministerial conference to be held on Wednesday.

"The Heart of Asia conference is taking place at a critical juncture when the region is confronted by many challenges including terrorism," the Afghan deputy foreign minister said at the opening session.

He said the activities of terror outfits including al-Qaeda are aimed at reminding the related parties of the gravity of the problem and demanding the whole region to tackle this international phenomenon.

"Afghanistan is determined to continue the fight against terrorism and response to its manifestations," he said, adding a peaceful and stable Afghanistan is in the best interest of the region.

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Australia's opposition leader jumps in gambling - mostly football betting or playing cards.

Saridwongsa Foundation, that 500,000 students took part in gambling - mostly football betting or playing cards.

THAILAND (The Nation) - Many university students are addicted to gambling - mostly football betting or playing cards.

They have told officials to seriously tackle the issue, suggesting that cellphone operators be asked to help by blocking youths' access to gambling websites. Such a move is urgent because, a network of academics who monitor gambling revealed during a seminar yesterday.

"Half a million students involved in gambling" THAILAND (The Nation) - Many university students are addicted to gambling - mostly football betting or playing cards.

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"Half a million students involved in gambling"

ISLAMABAD (Xinhua) -- Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister said his government attaches importance to having strong relations with all the regional countries for a prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan and its neighbors.

Afghanistan and its neighbors have a view of promoting mutual trust in the areas of security and economic interaction.

Pakistan's FM Advisor on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz told the opening session that Pakistan has continued to promote durable peace in Afghanistan as instability there is not in the interest of Pakistan.

"Pakistan will continue to support all endeavors aiming at strengthening peace and security in Afghanistan," Aziz said.

Speaking at the opening session, Aziz and Karzai hoped that the ministerial conference will help in evolving strategy against threats of terrorism and extremism.

Afghanistan's economy is on the rise, a World Bank official said.

With rising disparities in income distribution and an increased concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, Afghanistan's level of inequality is becoming increasingly high and continues to climb faster than most of its East Asian neighbors, the report says.

A poplar measure of inequality is the Gini coefficient, in which 0 represents complete equality and 100 represents a complete disparity. During 1997-1998 Asian financial crisis, during which poverty increased sharply, the Gini coefficient also fell. Since then, the Gini coefficient has increased from 30 points in 2000 and reached its highest level in 41 points in 2011.

Meanwhile, the benefits of economic growth have been enjoyed largely by the growing consumer class. Between 2003 and 2010, consumption per person of the richest 10 percent of Indonesians grew at over 6 percent per year after adjusting for inflation, but it grew less than 2 percent per year for the poorest 40 percent.

This contributed to a slowdown in poverty reduction, with the number of poor falling by only 2 percent per year since 2002.
India set to agree on bullet train import from Japan in summit talks

Tokyo (Kyodo News) -- India is making final arrangements to adopt Japanese bullet train technology for a high-speed railway project, with the leaders of the two countries set to unveil the agreement in a joint statement this week, a Japanese government source said Tuesday.

The statement following talks between Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday is expected to incorporate this accord, which would mark India’s first high-speed railway project, the source said. Abe’s meeting with Modi during his three-day visit to India from Friday will come at a time Japan hopes to regain lost ground after losing out to China in its bid to secure a key high-speed railway contract in Indonesia.

The proposed railway of about 500 kilometers will link Mumbai in western India and Ahmadabad, north of Mumbai, in roughly two hours, the source said. Construction of the project, which is estimated to cost 980 billion rupee (about US$14.68 billion), will begin in 2017, with the aim of starting railway operations in 2023.

Tokyo has sounded New Delhi out about a plan for Japan to provide yen loans on the premise that the railway contract will be given to a consortium of Japanese firms, the source said. The Japanese side has also been considering offering a package which includes rail cars and railway operation systems, as the Indian government has been cautious given its financial circumstances. Some have called for a competitive international tender.

Should India agree to adopt the Japanese shinkansen train technology, Japan is expected to take advantage of a policy of relaxing conditions for extending yen loans announced by Abe during an international conference in Kuala Lumpur last month, the source said. Abe said his country will ease conditions in carrying out its yen loan scheme for emerging countries in Asia, as Japan seeks to spur its economy through infrastructure exports to the fast-growing region.

Tokyo’s move to revise its yen loan scheme to make it more acceptable to potential partner countries is seen as a countermeasure to Beijing, which has tapped into the huge infrastructure development needs of Asia.

Competition between Japan and China over the Indian railway project has been tough as China also offered funds and technology transfer to India. China successfully bid for the Indonesian railway project connecting Jakarta and the West Java provincial capital of Bandung in October. The project was estimated to cost 78 trillion rupiah (US$5.5 billion).

Chinese tourists in Australia outspend Brits, Americans, Canadians combined

CHINA (China Daily) -- Chinese tourists in the past year reportedly spent AUS$7.7 billion (US$5.6 billion) in Australia, an increase of more than three times the rate of overall spending by visitors.

According to a report in The Australian, spending by visitors from China rose 43 percent in the 12 months to September, while the number of tourists from China increased by one quarter.

The depreciation of the Australian dollar, which has made the country more affordable than before, has been cited as the main driving force behind the significant rise of Chinese spending. What is more, the number is so huge that it even exceeds the spending by the British, Americans and Canadians combined.

With the rise and expansion of China’s middle class, outbound travel has become a trend among a good many Chinese families, who usually choose overseas holiday destinations over domestic ones when making vacation choices. Australia, with its natural and cultural landscape, has emerged as one of the most popular resort places for Chinese tourists.

“The problem of time, distance and cost mean that Australia will never be a high volume destination,” said John O’Sullivan, Tourism Research Australia managing director.

“OUR Tourism2020 strategy is unashamedly focused upon yield: encouraging international visitors to stay longer, disperse further and ultimately do more and spend more while in our country.”
Los Angeles (Xinhua) -- Investigators believed that the suspect couple who killed 14 people and injured 21 others in a deadly shooting in San Bernardino of Southern California had been radicalised "for some time," the FBI said on Monday.

"We have learned both subjects were radicalised and have been for some time," David Bowdich, assistant director in charge of the FBI's Los Angeles Field Office, told a press conference.

"Did the female radicalise the male in this case? The answer is we still do not know," Bowdich said. "As the investigation has progressed, we have learned and believe that both subjects were radicalised and have been for quite some time."

The latest revelation in the FBI-led probe came five days after Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and his wife, 29, shoot out at a Christmas party of San Bernardino County Health Department, where Farook had worked for five years.

Farook, a US-born citizen, and his wife Tashfeen Malik from Pakistan, were killed in a face-off with police hours after the attack on Wednesday morning in a conference room at the Inland Regional Centre social services agency in San Bernardino, about 100 km east of Los Angeles. The FBI said on Friday that authorities were investigating the mass shooting as an "act of terrorism."

"The investigation so far has developed indications of radicalisation by the killers and of potential inspiration by foreign terrorist organisations," FBI Director James Comey said on Friday.

The authorities, however, have no indication that the couple were part of an organised group, he added.

On Sunday night, US President Barack Obama said the two shooters were "self-radicalised," as no evidence had been found of links between the couple and any terrorist groups.

Bowdich said on Monday that the FBI investigators interviewed more than 400 people and gathered more than 300 pieces of evidence to figure out how and when the couple were radicalised.

Both of them had participated in target practice in the broader Los Angeles area and one of the target practices was done within days of shooting, he said.

Besides two hand guns, two assault rifles, and more than 6,000 rounds of ammunitions, police and investigators also found 12 pipe bombs and tools to make pipe bombs in their car and at their home after the couple were shot dead during the street shootout with police.

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Regional flags are placed near the building of the Inland Regional Centre where 14 people were killed in a mass shooting.

The latest revelation in the FBI-led probe came five days after Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and his wife, 29, shoot out at a Christmas party of San Bernardino County Health Department, where Farook had worked for five years.

Farook, a US-born citizen, and his wife Tashfeen Malik from Pakistan, were killed in a face-off with police hours after the attack on Wednesday morning in a conference room at the Inland Regional Centre social services agency in San Bernardino, about 100 km east of Los Angeles. The FBI said on Friday that authorities were investigating the mass shooting as an "act of terrorism."

"The investigation so far has developed indications of radicalisation by the killers and of potential inspiration by foreign terrorist organisations," FBI Director James Comey said on Friday.

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VN eyes renewable energy

HCM CITY (VNS, ANN) -- Reducing the use of scarce natural resources through measurement of energy efficiency is critically needed to meet the energy demand of a growing economy like Vietnam, Vu Van Khiem, director general of the Ministry of Science and Technology’s National Office of the Southern Region, has said.

Speaking at a three-day training conference on sustainable energy technology last week in HCM City, Khiem said that Vietnam was facing an energy shortage within the next few decades.

Economic growth and rapid industrial expansion based on low energy costs have consumed significant amounts of energy and other resources, increasing the depletion of natural resources.

In the future, Vietnam will shift from an importer to an exporter of energy and the level of dependence on imported energy would increase, he added.

State agencies in Vietnam such as the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Industry and Trade and other agencies have worked with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) on labelling energy and building energy efficiency standards for appliances and replacing the use of fossil fuels.

As a result, there have been positive results in management and energy savings, he said.

In recent decades, with the present rate of consumption of traditional energy resources, energy reserves are expected to be depleted rapidly, Khiem said.

According to forecasts, by 2055 the level of global energy consumption will increase by 53 percent. Enterprises around the world are constantly conducting research to seek new and renewable energy sources, he said.

The traditional burning of fossil fuels has caused adverse environmental impact such as the greenhouse effect, rising radioactivity and global warming, he added.

Also speaking at the conference, Cho Chang-hee, principal researcher of the Korea Electrotechnology Research Institute, said that in Korea, island microgrids were being used to meet demand.

Microgrids that have helped meet increased demand for green energy globally are especially suitable for remote villages, he said. They have helped improve electricity penetration ratio and reduced petroleum use.

"Fewer CO2 emissions are the result," he said. "It also decreases transmission losses."

A microgrid is a system of multiple power sources of different sizes and technologies connected to the central grid. The system can disconnect and function autonomously as physical and economic conditions dictate.

More than 1,400 microgrid projects have been deployed in more than 100 countries, Cho said.

The conference was organised by the National Research Council of Science & Technology, ASEM SMEs Eco-Innovation Center, Korea Institute of Energy Research, Korea Electrotechnology Research Institute, and Korea Institute of Industrial Technology.

Buses await passengers at the Southern Bus Terminal in Vientiane.

Wind turbines at the Tuy Phong Wind Power Plant in Binh Thuan province.

Bus fares drop as fuel price dips

Times Reporters

Users of public transport can look forward to lower bus fares now that the Ministry of Public Works and Transport has announced a decrease in ticket prices on routes from Vientiane to the provinces.

The Transport Department says the drop in fares is the result of a steady decline in the price of fuel over the past five years.

In 2011, the price of petrol was 8,500 kip per litre. At present, the price of diesel fuel is about 6,300 kip per litre, with the price of diesel and petrol ranging from 6,000 to 7,000 kip.

Passengers travelling from Vientiane to the northern provinces are currently charged a rate of 238 kip per kilometre, while those going to the central and southern provinces are charged at a rate of 164 kip per kilometre.

Bus fares have been adjusted to reflect the drop in the fuel price and to ensure the new charges match the costs incurred by transport service providers while being fair for passengers.

From December 10, bus fares on routes from Vientiane to the northern provinces will be charged at 185 kip per kilometre.

The price of fuel is calculated to be 6,000 kip to 7,000 kip per litre based on that used by ordinary buses.

However, the price of a ticket on a Category 2 VIP bus will be increased to 20 percent higher than the fare on an ordinary bus, while the fare on a Category 1 VIP bus will now be 30 percent higher than the price of travel on an ordinary bus.

The lowest long-distance bus fare on a northern route, from Vientiane to Vangvieng, will be 28,000 kip, while the highest fare, on VIP 1 bus from Vientiane to Bokeo province, will be 215,000 kip.

Meanwhile the fares on buses from Vientiane to the central and southern provinces will be charged at 139 kip per kilometre, with the fuel price estimated at 6,000 kip to 7,000 kip per litre.

In addition, the fare on a VIP 2 bus will rise to 20 percent of the fare on an ordinary bus while a ticket on a VIP 1 bus will cost 30 percent of the ordinary fare.

A ticket on an ordinary bus from Vientiane to Borikhamxay province will be 20,000 kip per person, while the most expensive ticket, that bought for a VIP 1 bus from Vientiane to Attapeu province, will cost 210,000 kip.

Inter-provincial fares will be calculated by the provincial public works and transport departments, with the routes from province to province to be agreed by the two parties involved.

Bank deposits “haircut”, Grexit off the table, Greece implements all commitments: PM

ATHENS (Xinhua) -- Greece has pushed the risk of a “haircut” on bank deposits and Grexit off the table by implementing all its commitments under the latest bailout agreement with international creditors, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said on Monday night.

A few hours after his Left-led coalition government passed on Sunday the latest crunch test in the parliament during the vote on the 2016 state budget, the prime minister granted an interview to state broadcaster ERT.

He hailed as a significant milestone in efforts to overcome the six-year debt crisis and restore growth the recapitalisation of Greek banks this December, the third in three years.

"There is no more fear of deposit cuts and Grexit," he underlined, dismissing reports in some international media suggesting that Greece was a “rudderless ship” heading towards the rocks.

A German daily cited this week an alleged report of the German embassy in Athens containing the particular description. The report was dismissed from officials in both countries.

Tsipras attributed it to the “never ending efforts of some conservative circles to attack the government.”

Amidst refined concern over the stability of his ruling coalition after the recent expulsion of two lawmakers who voted against party line on prior actions for the disbursement of more loans to Athens, he assured that he feels “very safe” with the reduced parliamentary majority of 153 MPs in the 300-member strong chamber.

He does not intend to seek the formation of a unity government, but would most welcome wider consensus on major issues, such as the upcoming pension system reform and the refugee crisis.

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New Zealand gov’t deficit better than expected

Wellington (Xinhua) -- The New Zealand government deficit for the fourth quarter of 2015/16 ended September was $2.3 billion (NZ$3.4 billion) under the forecast of $1.2 billion (NZ$1.5 billion) at the same time last year, and net debt relatively constant.

Core tax revenue was up by 5.8 percent while core expenses grew by 2.5 percent, the Treasury said. The operating deficit was NZ$837 million (US$635.6 million) under the Treasury forecast in May, due to tax and other revenue coming in above the forecast.

Canadian gov’t announces tax cut to strengthen middle class

OTTAWA (Xinhua) -- Canada announced Monday a tax-cut measure to strengthen the middle class. The tax-cut will provide some CA$3.4 million (US$6.7 million) in annual tax relief to the middle class and will benefit about CA$9 million (US$6.7 million) every year. Canadian Finance Minister Bill Morneau tabled in the House of Commons a Notice of Ways and Means Motion to reduce the federal income tax rate to 20.5 percent.

Ford says auto sales rising rapidly with ventures in China

CHICAGO (Xinhua) -- Leading US automaker Ford said Monday that auto sales with its Chinese joint ventures in China sold more than 106,283 vehicles in the four months to the end of September, compared to that of 2014 which was about 360 million tonnes, an increase of 20 percent.

The total consumption of iron and steel for construction purposes this year is expected to be about 360 million tonnes, an increase of 20 percent from 2014.

The ADB submission system will be closed by midnight of 13 December 2015.

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Iron ore demand to fall further next year

China (China Daily, ANN) -- Iron ore demand is expected to fall further in China next year as the country continues to slow down steel output, according to forecast by an industry researcher Monday.

Demand for iron ore will fall by 4.2 percent in 2016 from a year ago, said the forecast, made by the China Metallurgical Industry Planning and Research Institute. Steel production will fall by 3.1 percent to 781 million metric tons during the same period, as economic growth continues to moderate.

Unsold inventories of commercial apartments continue to be at a high this year, the report said, adding that supply will continue to outstrip demand next year.

Total consumption of iron and steel for construction purposes this year is expected to be about 360 million tonnes, an increase of 20 percent from the same period in 2014.

Machinery industry, another major user of slower growth revenue this year due to poor demand. Equipment with higher iron and steel consumption per ton will see more output declines next year, it said. The automotive industry, the mainstay of the steel sector for long, recorded its slowed growth for this year.

Overall the fiscal results had improved from the previous year.

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The NIU now invites interested eligible consultants to provide information indicating that you are interested in the position of the above position to assist DOSMEP in the management and coordination of the SME Access to Finance Project.

In order to qualify for this position, the candidates shall meet the following experience and competence requirements:

1. University degree in law, preferably with specialization in commercial and business law.
2. At least 10 years of working experience with both public and private sectors in Laos in developing business contracts, contract negotiation and business dispute resolution.
3. Minimum 5 years of experience in development projects, performing tasks related to legal drafting and review of contracts.
4. English language fluency in reading, writing and speaking is mandatory.
5. High degree of computer literacy and sound knowledge of Microsoft Office (Excel, Word, PowerPoint) and internet.

The Consultant will be selected in accordance with the World Bank’s Guidelines “Selection and Employment of Consultants”. Individual Consultants (IC) selection method, January 2011. The NIU will express interest in the Consultant selected in accordance with the World Bank’s Guidelines “Selection and Employment of Consultants”.

The Consultant will be engaged on a part time basis equivalent to 4 months in each of the three years of the project. The Consultant will be selected in accordance with the World Bank’s Guidelines “Selection and Employment of Consultants”.

The Consultant will be hired on a retainer basis for 45 working days over a 36 months period and will coordinate the SME Access to Finance Project.

Expressions of interest must be delivered to the address below on or before December 16, 2015, 16:00 o’clock (submissions via email are also acceptable).

To: Mr. Keophouthone Inthivong, Procurement Officer, Ministry of Industry and Commerce, National Implementation Unit (NIU), Ban Phonxay, Xaysettha District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR, Tel: +856 (21) 41 39 16 – 45 39 82; Fax: +856(21) 41 39 16; E-mail: keophouthone.in@laosaft.org; Attn: Mr. PhouviengPhongs, NIU Director

Only Short-listed candidates will be contacted for the interview.
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SCG Authorized Dealer
**Policy and Project Officer**  
One-year contract (renewable)  
(Deadline for all applications: 18 December 2015)

The British Embassy Vientiane is part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s (FCO) world-wide network of 230 Posts, representing British political, military, economic, visa and consular interests overseas.

The role of Policy and projects Officer is to provide top-class policy, communications, economic and security advice to the Ambassador, Deputy Head of Mission (DHM) and Foreign Office in London. This is an exciting job at the frontline of the Embassy’s work, and would suit an experienced analyst with top-notch research and advisory skills. The jobholder will help promote trade and investment between the UK and Laos, as well as British interests and businesses. He/She will also liaise with regional neighbours and colleagues based in Singapore on economic and climate change/environmental issues. This job is high-profile, at the heart of the Embassy’s policy and projects activities, and therefore essential for the Embassy to successfully deliver its objectives. The postholder will be given responsibility and license to be innovative, but will also work as part of the Embassy team in a friendly and supportive environment. The FCO has a strong ethos of diversity, equality and teamwork within Embassies, and provides a number of benefits to locally employed staff.

- Research and analyse socio-economic development trends of Laos in order to help develop UK-Lao bilateral relations across a wide range of policy sectors, of direct interest to the UK government.
- Contact building and coordinate with the government in the areas of prosperity, education, environment—climate change and energy, illegal wildlife trade and anti-money laundering.
- Manage bilateral Programme Budget including Development of strategy for use of Embassy Bilateral Programme Budget and inviting and assessing bids. Organising the Embassy BP Committee meetings.
- Lead on implementing in-house projects or activities including BP and prosperity ASEAN fund through CEGP.
- Manage the Chevening scholarship programme including developing marketing promotion and organising and be part of the interview panel.
- Help involve in drafting, translating, editing and proof reading of press release, speeches and other documents.
- Lead on organising high profile visits within Laos by the Ambassador and DHM as well as inward visits to Laos by senior UK officials, who bring political messages to Laos.

**Requirements**

- Fluent written and spoken English.
- At least 3 years experience in a Project/communications/ business in an office or Embassy, some of which must have been gained in an international or English-speaking environment.
- A good general understanding of the policy and economic landscape in Laos.
- Ability to work under own initiative, and at times under pressure, but also to work effectively as part of a small team.
- Strong communication and interpersonal skills.
- Experience of working with government and the media an advantage.
- Fluency in Lao an advantage;

**Salary**

The grade of the job will be B3. The successful applicant must be available to start work in January 2016. The successful applicant will be offered a one-year fixed-term contract, subject to a 2-month probationary period. There is the possibility of upgrading to a permanent contract.

The British Government is an equal opportunities employer and this position is open to both Lao and foreign nationals. The successful candidate will work full-time, 40 hours per week. Normal working will be 0830-1630 Monday-Friday. Employees will be entitled to 20 days of leave per year, as well as up to a combined annual total of 14 Lao National and British public holidays. They will also benefit from a private medical package. Travel to the UK or to British Embassies in the region may be required and occasional work during evenings and weekends which will be compensated with time off in lieu. Training opportunities will be provided, as necessary, for the successful applicant.

To Apply

Please send your cover letter detailing why you’re interested in the position, CV and the completed application form, which can be downloaded from our website at, [https://www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/uk-embassy-vientiane/about/recruitment](https://www.gov.uk/government/world/organisations/uk-embassy-vientiane/about/recruitment) by 18 December 2015, to laos.recruitment@fcio.gov.uk. Please clearly indicate your name and position title in the subject of your email.

Please note that incomplete applications will not be taken into consideration.

No relocation or relocation expenses are guaranteed in this position. You must have or be able to obtain work authorisation for Laos in order to apply. Applicants must have or be able to obtain Laos work authorisation.

Staff recruited locally by the British Embassy is subject to terms and conditions of service according to local Laos employment law. Employment offers are subject to successful clearance of pre-employment checks. Only short-listed applications will be called for personal interviews.

The British Embassy is an equal opportunities employer and does not discriminate on grounds of ethnic origin, race, religious beliefs, age, disability, gender or sexual orientation.
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7. We provide multi-language staffs to service our customers with pleasure.

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9. Worry-free of the parking lot area as we have comfortable parking spaces for more than 200 cars in the mall.

10. Bottom line is that Rimping Supermarket reach “Where shopping is a pleasure”
INVITATION FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

The Xe-PlanXe-Namnoy Power Company Limited (PNPC) is the owner and developer of the 410 MW Xe-PlanXe-Namnoy Hydroelectric Power Project located in the Provinces of Champasack and Attapeu, Lao PDR which is currently under construction.

The PNPC is currently seeking for a Canteen Operator for the Main Construction Camp located in the Bolaven Plateau, Paksong District, Champasack Province. Any interested and qualified business entities can submit their expressions of interest with the following requirements;

1. Letter of Interest
2. Copy of Business License
3. Copy of Financial Statement/Bank Statement
4. Staff Plan (List of Canteen Personnel with attached education-training certificates and certificates of experiences)
5. Operations Plan for a LAK40,000/meal/person at three times/day, 7 days/week
6. List of equipment and materials to operate the canteen
7. A minimum experience of three years in operating and managing a restaurant
8. Restriction: Any entity with relatives working at the PNPC are not entitled to submit expressions of interest.

Interested entities should personally submit their documents to the PNPC at 6th Floor Capital Tower, 23 Singha Road, Nongbone Village, Xaysettha District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR or at the Pakse Office, HouayGnangkam Village, Pakse District, Champasack Province, Lao PDR. The closing date for submission is on 11 December 2015. For further inquiries, interested entities may contact mindh@pnpclaos.com or khemaksonep@pnpclaos.com or call (021) 45 5045 at the PNPC Vientiane Office and (031) 21 5048 at the Pakse Office.
An organic farm in Phuket offers sweet corn, rice, vegetables and a whole lot more.

Visitors are welcome to walk through the four large fields of corn and sun hemp or climb into an electric-powered cart to the traditional Thai house that borders the rice paddies to take photos of the albino buffaloes and kids dressed in old-style attire.

"The sun hemp has beautiful yellow flowers but our main reason for growing it here is to use them as green manure to improve and protect the soil," agronomist Surapol explains.

"Kids these days have no idea where their food comes from. They don’t know that it takes time to grow rice and vegetables. Just know that the food comes in plastic bags and is sometimes ready to eat straight out the packet. They can’t tell the difference between krapao (Ho Basil), horapha (Thai Sweet Basil) and maenglad (Lemon Basil). This learning centre allows them to learn about nature and, I hope, preserve it.

"It’s heartbreaking to see so many vegetables and fruits in the markets that are not safe to eat. That’s why I focus on chemical-free farming. I am lucky to have the help of corn guru Surapol Chuwong and organic farm expert Uthai Gansom," he says.

A shopping area is located around the entrance with a small selection of shops offering more than 1,000 items. There’s an ice-cream parlour with cones and cups selling corn ice-cream, corn silk tea, popcorn and corn on the cob. A souvenir shop has premium OTP products from the island as well as from other southern provinces.

There are corners with cool props for photos but they all fade into the background as visitors spot the sheep, miniature cows and rabbits.

"I’ve never focused on making a profit. My aim is to produce food that is tasty and safe while creating a sustainable environment.

"When I was young, Phuket was a beautiful place. It was full of greenery. Hotels and other buildings have mushroomed over the last 30 to 40 years and that greenery has been severely eroded. I am trying to bring nature back to downtown Phuket so our younger generation can learn about nature and, I hope, enjoy cold milk, trick into fine dishes or sip the farm’s signature drink, a cocktail in which the main ingredient is the South Korean favourite soju. It’s mixed with domestic organic fruits and vegetables from the farm including corn, mulberry, pandan leaf and pineapple.

A free-form split-level tree house stands along side. Ten metres tall, it is designed by architects from Studio Mit with a covered net made from pineapple. It will soon be used as an exclusive dining venue for parties of four, who will be served a meal from the famous Thai restaurant Nara that will open in the main building.

The main building is an airy, two-storey construction covered with brown cedar shingles that’s designed to mimic the shape of a large corn husk. From here, you can admire the farm in all its glory.
An emotional return home

Ms Sorn is one of the human trafficking victims.

“...missed you my beloved daughter, said my mother as I ran into her arms, tears streaming down my face,” Sorn (not her real name) shares.

“Every day, I had to sell cucumbers, pineapples and vegetables for my traffickers. I worked in Thailand for 3 years without work permits and pay. I worked from 7am to midnight every day for 3 years. No days off and no free time. At 11pm every night, I worked from 7am to midnight without work permits and pay. My father went to tend to the cows, I left with my friends for the border and crossed with the hope of working to help my family’s condition. We were poor, with barely enough rice to eat and a home that was falling apart; I wanted to help. The broker I met told me I would receive a good salary that would help my family become better. However in the end, I was found with a broken dream, no way to help my family and in trouble,” Sorn says.

“My cousin and I were asked to deliver vegetables to a nearby building when we decided to escape. We approached the police for help and they sent us to KorKeli Centre for a year, a place for human trafficking survivors to learn valuable skills, before going back to Laos,” Sorn shares. Now 21-years-old, she is completing grade 4 of primary school in the province of Saravan.

Sorn is also one of the participants who joined the trafficking prevention programmes.

“This event was a great success for human trafficking survivors. Such an event builds awareness, teaches them how to protect themselves and helps them identify their strengths and weaknesses. The lessons they have learned from this event will help them succeed in society and hopefully allow them to learn and improve,” said Mr Thongphone Oudanith, deputy office of the Savannakhet Provincial Labour and Social Welfare Department.

“I was very happy and grateful to join the human trafficking survivors’ events in the province of Savannakhet. It was the first time I got to join activities like this and meet other people from different places that were facing the same problem. It made me feel good. I will use the lessons learned from these activities in my daily life and share with my friends,” Sorn says with hope.

“I have learned about the dangers of human trafficking, from the dangers of working without the right documentation to recognising signs of abuse from employers who refuse to pay employees,” she says.

World Vision expanded its work with vulnerable communities to give them valuable skills and knowledge to be independent.

International, an NGO that works with its partners to protect children throughout the country. According to a recent Lao Social Indicator Survey (2012), 76 percent of children have experienced violent discipline and hundreds of children continue to be victims of exploitative labour and human trafficking.

“I would like to thank my sponsor who helped and supported me. I will try my best to make a better life for myself and make my dreams come true,” she added.


World Vision actively works with its partners to protect children throughout the country. According to a recent Lao Social Indicator Survey (2012), 76 percent of children have experienced violent discipline and hundreds of children continue to be victims of exploitative labour and human trafficking.

World Vision Laos is working towards systemic change, which requires both changes in community behaviours and institutional strengthening.

—Source World Vision Laos
Streetwise

What are your thoughts on the amendments to the constitution?

The National Assembly opened its ongoing ordinary session on Monday, with the meeting scheduled to end on December 25. Lawmakers are debating amendments to the constitution and Vientiane Times asked various NA members for their opinion on the need for these changes.

Mr. Khamdeng Kommadon, President of the Xepong Lao Front for National Construction and N4 member for Xepong province: It’s great that we’re getting together again at the National Assembly to discuss the problems we have in Laos and how we can resolve them. This time, we’re debating changes to the constitution. This is the third time we’ve held these talks. We’re having in-depth discussions because these issues are very important for our country as the constitution is the basis of our laws. As Laos changes and develops, so the constitution must be amended. This is especially important with the coming of the Asian Economic Community (AEC) and globalization. When the constitution is amended, some laws must be changed so that certain situations and the regulations governing them can be compatible. NA members are sharing their ideas, especially on important parts of the constitution as it will govern our development process.

Mr. Vankham Itachach, President of the Savannakhet Lao Front for National Construction and N4 member for Savannakhet province: The constitution is the basis of our legal system and governs all our activities. It needs to be amended because Laos is developing and the people need a stronger constitution that reflects the changing circumstances. The constitution is at the heart of everything we do so NA members are sharing their ideas on amendments and additions to laws that have been in existence for over 40 years. Many things have to be changed so that we can integrate with the AEC and the rest of the world, and make it easier for us to mitigate and everyone has voiced their opinion. We need amendment from everyone involved so that we can foster development. Changes to the constitution are important because they are the foundation of government and will underlie that we work, it can be confident that our laws are effective. The authorities should publicise the content of the new constitution to people around the country and make sure everyone understands it, so that it has public support.

Mr. Boonthien Thongkao, Head of the Nongnangkhan International Border Checkpoint and N4 member for Savannakhet province: We’ve been talking about these changes for a long time and by almost everyone. We want to rewrite some of the laws that need updating because many things are changing, especially as we prepare to join the AEC. To promote the new constitution, we should make sure the government understands it and complies with it. In the past people have been fairly law abiding but not completely as some people didn’t fully understand the laws.

Mr. Simoun Oumxay, Vice President of the Laos Union and N4 member for Savannakhet province: It’s very important to amend the constitution because there have been a lot of changes, both in society and in terms of economics. The constitution has not been changed a lot. Some articles have been added but not many things have changed. We amended some of the articles to make improvements and have made changes to about 20 percent. This has been done because we want everything in Laos to run smoothly and ensure that we are in a strong position to compete with other countries.
The Lao PDR celebrates 40 years in grand style

Editorial Desk

The Lao people can be justifiably proud of the widespread and meaningful celebrations to mark 40 years of the Lao PDR and the nation's achievements on the road to development.

The Lao PDR took place amid reverence and solemnity on December 2 in the nation's capital of Vientiane. Tens of thousands of people attended, including Lao citizens, foreign diplomats and people of Lao origin now living overseas.

The programme of activities staged for the giant communist country marked the Lao PDR's centennial celebrations. A wonderful parade involving 15,000 people, the official groundbreaking ceremony for the high-speed rail link to Cambodia, an art event featuring 4,000 people and firework displays.

Speaking at the parade, which took place at the That Luang esplanade, Secretary General of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party and President of the Lao PDR Choummaly Sayasone said: “Today, we together with our Lao compatriots of all ethnicities mark the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Lao PDR. When we look back at the 40 years that have passed since December 2, 1975, it is with great pride that we remember how the Congress of People’s Representatives, which represented the aspirations of the entire Lao population, agreed to proclaim the establishment of the Lao PDR, finally erasing the feudal and colonial regimes that had occupied Laos for so many years.”

“This proclamation of the Lao PDR was the fruit of long democratic national revolution that took place for many years under the great and capable leadership of the Party. It was a victory for the solidarity of the masses and the unity of our army and people, which enhanced the tradition of ardent patriotism, as well as the valiant and brave struggle of our nation.”

“During 40 years of protection and development by the new regime under the leadership of the Party, our country has headed firmly towards its targeted destination. This makes us proud, as in no era before has our beloved country been so peaceful, developed or progressive; or enjoyed the status it does today in the regional and international arena,” he added.

The magnificent ceremony was put on to mark this noteworthy occasion, which took place in an atmosphere of joy as people all across the country marked the anniversary of the national development and protection.

Every sector and every community throughout the country actively took part in the celebrations, either by attending parades, watching or participating in a show, or helping out with security.

The celebrations enabled the people of Laos and the world to appreciate the scale and fruitfulness of development under the leadership of the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party over the past four decades. Economic infrastructure has constantly improved and poverty has been addressed step by step. The government spent a large sum of money on the celebrations to ensure they were praiseworthy and successful.

The sectors involved worked hard on the preparations, including rehearsals, decorations and security, in order to achieve an outstanding result. We should offer them our thanks for carrying out this huge task.

The night before the parade, students, officials and other participants were encouraged to gather and sleep in schools, government offices and ministries to ensure they were ready to transport people to the site of the parade early the next morning.

This was yet another demonstration of the solidarity and unity of the Lao people in serving their country. It was a great opportunity for a large number of people to take part in these activities and it was a day for everyone involved to remember.

On the day itself, crowds turned out to watch the wonderful parades at the That Luang esplanade and in the evening there was an amazing show at the National Sports Complex. At night, people gathered to enjoy stunning fireworks displays at the That Luang esplanade and the sports complex, which aptly reflected the success of the whole celebrations.

The celebrations were conducted in a peaceful and orderly manner throughout the country and the magnificent fireworks displays were a fitting end to this long-anticipated event.

Following the celebrations in Vientiane all of the provinces also organised heartfelt events to mark the occasion, including Bokeo, Champasak, Savannakhet and Luang Prabang. The celebrations that took place in Luang Prabang province coincided with events staged by the authorities to mark the 20th anniversary of Luang Prabang as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Benefits of Trans-Pacific Partnership and issues to look out for

Anwar Nasution

JAKARTA (The Jakarta Post) -- Indonesia should join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as a way to promote trade and open up the economy.

Such reform would include restructuring state-owned enterprises (SOEs), improving the investment climate, improving economic efficiency and productivity to create jobs for the nation’s surplus labor and promoting exports. The speed at which businesses in the East Asian countries have become more developed and prosperous has mainly been due to their greater penetration into international markets through trade and including private investment.

The People’s Republic of China (PRC), which started deregulating its economy in 1978, 12 years after Indonesia in 1966, has grown much faster than Indonesia. Its currency, the renminbi (RMB), is now an elite international currency and a member of the International Monetary Fund’s special drawing rights. During Mao Zedong’s years, nobody held the RMB as a store of value.

By contrast, our napial moves like a yo-yo and it is very much affected by short-term capital flows. Using Mao Zedong’s terminology, Deng Xiaoping adopted “capitalist readers” by inviting foreign direct investment (FDI), owned by foreign capitalists, to create job opportunities for China’s labour surplus, to modernise the economy and to promote the export of agricultural and manufacturing products. Starting as a poor country with assembly plants to produce cheap and low quality industrial goods and products, China’s gross domestic product (GDP) is now bigger than the GDP of Japan and its export value is the second biggest in the world after Germany. China is the biggest recipient of FDI among emerging economies and is now a major military power in the Asia Pacific.

FDI brings in not only capital but also skills and technology as well as networks of international markets. Severe international market competition forced companies in China to increase efficiency, reduce costs, move to higher value-added products and upgrade the quality of production. Because of these trends, the PRC now exports its own telecommunications sets, computers, aircraft, high-speed locomotives and nuclear generating plants. Indonesia, on the other hand, remains a producer and exporter of unprocessed raw materials and a borrower from China.

Unlike in Singapore, SOEs in Indonesia still demand capital injections from the government. Because of limited job opportunities at home, Indonesia exports its uneducated and low-skilled labour surplus all over the world. Other options for the unemployed are to work in the non-formal sector, such as peddlers and ojek (motorcycle taxi) drivers with very low productivity.

The objective of America’s TPP trade agreement is to achieve “free and open trade and investment” in the Asia Pacific. Such an objective mimics the ambitions outlined in the Bogor Goals crafted in an Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum 20 years ago. The TPP now has 12 member countries but is largely a free trade agreement between two big countries, the US and Japan. Trade between these two economic giants accounts for about 60 percent of the TPP’s economic benefits.

What the Lao papers say

Police continuing to tackle social problems

Groups of youths are continuing to ride motorbikes recklessly and disturbing society so police are disseminating traffic regulations to students at many schools around the province.

Recently, police organised to spread the information in Nongbong and Xiangkebou Secondary Schools and will continue their efforts at many lower and higher secondary schools around the capital.

Deputy Head of Vientiane Traffic Police Department, Major Sangkhom Phoumthong said that police will continue only distributing traffic regulations to students but also urging them not to join groups of youths who ride motorbikes involved in antisocial behaviour.

Police also encouraged students to help protect the peace and order of society. Police said they would use strict measures to punish anyone who did not respect the law.

Police are also increasing efforts to solve traffic problems and prevent crime in society.

Senior Police Inspector Pasaxon Van-Abhi, in the opinion of a Vientiane Mai Daily reader.

Everyone should take responsibility to clean up rubbish

Many people are still not taking responsibility for their actions and throwing their rubbish carelessly. This has to stop if we want to make the city clean and tidy.

The reader called in about one littering incident near Talat Sao Shopping Mall. Although the amount of rubbish was not that much the concerned official needed to solve this problem as the mall is a key tourist area in Vientiane.

This problem is the result of people not putting garbage in the bin or that the cleaning-up team is not properly clean up the area. Either way it has to clean to attract tourists.

Cleaning-up will mean the city is tidy with fresh air and a good environment and many people will want to come and visit, in the opinion of a Pasaxon Van-Abhi reader.

Everyone must contribute to cleanliness and not litter to solve this problem.

Pasaxon Van-Abhi Weekly, November 6

Modified motorbikes causing social disturbance

Many youths in Vientiane province are still using modified motorbikes to cause social disorder so all concerned officials are working hard to solve this.

To tackle the problem traffic police of Phonhong district, Vientiane province have organised random checks on modified motorbikes.

Phonhong district traffic police reported they recently intercepted checks along many roads around the community and at schools and have seized 18 modified motorbikes and re-educated the motorcyclists.

Traffic police urged owners not to modify their motorbikes as it breaks the law and increases the risk of road accidents.

Modified motorbikes also disturb other people, especially bikers with loud exhausts involved in illegal street racing.

--Khamunsang Dowly, December 9
Vangvieng to set the scene for a new music experience

The first ever Vangvieng Music Festival 2015 will take place over a five-filled days from December 18-19 in the parking lot of Lom cave in Vangvieng district. Music fans from far and wide will be able to enjoy listening to leading Lao rock artists and rock bands from neighbouring countries as well teaching base with world class DJ s from Japan, Germany, Thailand, France and EDM party.

With different DJs slated to perform on each night of the festival, it is expected to be a funky atmosphere for all in the cool December climate of Vangvieng. The Lao artists will be led by Sack Cells, Black Eyes, Boxer, Metallic, Leprosy, and Taty Akard while the Thai rock bands will be led by Innstinct and Skykck Ranger. Meanwhile the Lao DJs shall be led by DJ Taty, Energy King Z and Vienntian Electro. They shall be joined by famous DJ from Germany DJ Nicone, DJ Xam Zhimhawe from France, DJ Yodji, DJ Ruby, DJ Hicolo and DJ PBLAA from Thailand. This first Vangvieng Music Festival is expected to help promote the domestic tourism atmosphere, especially Vangvieng, a well-known place in the world. Lao Pride Records and Smart Event Organizer are seeking to create new musical experiences in the country as well to open changes for Lao artists to showcase their skills on the stage with the foreign artists. During the event, a product exhibition will be available for the promotion of domestic products, which is set to run from December 13-19, starting at 10am. A film festival will also run from December 13-17, screening a number of outstanding Lao films for audiences, starting at 5:00pm each evening.

The Vangvieng Music Festival will start from 1pm on December 18-19, encouraging the audience to immerse themselves in the atmosphere and take in all the musical styles on offer at different stages. People who are interested to join this big music festival event can now book the tickets, which are currently on sale to members of the public. The tickets will have face values ranging from 70.000kip to 250.000 kip and can be purchased by contacting 030 9414245 or 030 9414246

A promotional poster for the inaugural Vangvieng Music Festival 2015.

Flash to appear in ‘Batman v Superman’

LOS ANGELES (The Statesman) -- The Flash, a popular superhero character, may appear in ‘Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice’, Michael Wilkinson, who designed the costumes for some characters in the film, has revealed.

During a presentation at CCXP - Comic Con Experience 2015, the costume designer was asked about how he made a modern and different costume for The Flash, reports acehowzta.com.

“Well, I’m not really at liberty to talk about The Flash right now, but it’s something that you’ll be seeing in the future in our films,” Wilkinson said.

He later revealed that fans would see him in ‘Batman v Superman’.

“You do get a glimpse of him, of course, in ‘Batman v Superman’. But I’m really looking forward to taking the amazing, iconic costume for The Flash and interpreting it in a fresh way where Ezra Miller is playing The Flash,” he added.

‘Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice’ also stars Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman, Jesse Eisenberg as Lex Luthor, Amy Adams as Lois Lane and Jason Momoa as Aquaman. The movie is scheduled to release on March 25 next year.

Namfon adds glamour to Minister Cup 2015

Sisouphan Amphonephong

Local pop princess Namfon added to the atmosphere of the football.action at The Minister Cup last week performing alongside other local artists for fans.

Namfon Inthavong’s performance at Lanexang Stadium in Nonghay village, Hadexoung district was hot on the heels of her appearance in the Asean Celebrity Explore Quest Malaysia 2015, where she represented Laos while joining other regional personalities in various activities during her weekend trip around Malaysia.

Meanwhile, Namfon expressed her happiness being able to sing with other Lao stars such as Neuang Super One and Kimmy Temple Guy to perform at the recent football event.

In other news, Namfon also performed at the 40th anniversary celebrations of Lao Brewery Company Managing Director Mr Kissaana Vongsay and his wife. Namfon said it was great to sing at such a warm and loving event for the well known couple.

Namfon has also been performing at other various corporate events including golf days and recently took up a role as presenter for Adidas sportswear.

Namfon said fans could follow her live performances schedule and other events on her Facebook page.

Mekong River Commission

The role of MRC is to promote and coordinate sustainable management and development of water and related resources for the countries’ mutual benefit and the people’s well-being

MRC Secretariat is now recruiting a highly qualified Lao candidate for the position of Maintenance Technician

Maintenance Technician

- Individual Consultant, General Support position
- Division/Section: Finance and Administration Section
- Work location: Mekong River Commission in Vientiane, Lao PDR
- Contract type/Duration: 6 months Service Contract

Key Responsibilities:
- Plan and direct all maintenance work on the MRC premises, ensuring that buildings and equipment are kept in good condition and that staff enjoy good uninterrupted working conditions;
- Prepare maintenance schedules for the MRC premises, equipment and appliances, and perform routine maintenance to ensure smooth functioning of all equipment. This includes, but is not limited to, power supply, communications, utilities, health and safety issues etc. Liaises with-housekeeping problems encountered with utilities;
- Maintain a system to control MRC archive and storage by checking/updating the equipment/documents on a regular basis;
- Prepare and update the inventory list of the MRC’s and provide inventory reports on quarterly basis. Ensure the effective maintenance and control of the MRC fixed assets on a regular basis. Reconcile the fixed assets with Solomon Management Financial Management System in cooperation with Finance unit;
- Coordinate with Unit/Division/Sections and the Property Survey Committee to identify any fixed assets items to be sold out and/or donated and update the inventory record accordingly;
- Coordinate with work and the auditor on the audit of Fixed Assets;
- Keep the maintenance equipment inventory listing;
- Oversee proper setting up of the conference room and meeting rooms for official functions and take bookings for the rooms;
- Supervise and coordinate daily activities of all cleaners, gardeners, helpers, and security staff plus any staff working for contractors hired to do maintenance work; oversees regular mowing of grass within MRC grounds and proper disposal of cut grass, tree branches, twigs and related materials;
- Manage the provision of adequate office space, cleaning and security services;
- Arranges for official transportation for the MRC staff, consultant and visitors;
- Supervise all office drivers and ensure proper reports are maintained on monthly basis;
- Prepare and update the monthly financial reports, including the mileage, wear and tear of spare parts, etc, and prepare request for maintenance and keep maintenance record of each vehicle for reference;
- Performs other duties related to post as required by the supervisor.

Qualifications/Requirements:

- University degree, diploma or vocational school in related fields;
- At least five years experience in the area of maintenance at least one year in supervisory level, preferably in an international organisation;
- Experience in dealing with authorities / government agencies;
- Wide experience of maintenance, i.e. electrical equipment, furniture, office building, is required;
- Good knowledge of written and spoken English is required;
- Knowledge of more than one foreign language is an advantage.

The Terms of Reference and other information can be obtained from the MRC website http://www.mrcmekong.org/workings-with-local-candidates. Qualified local candidates are encouraged to apply. Only short-listed candidates will be notified.

Application procedures:
- Local candidates are eligible to apply. The application should include (i) a cover letter outlining clearly how the candidate meets the requirements of the position, (ii) a detailed CV, and (iii) MRC Personal History Form. The position listing and all correspondence should be sent to:

Mekong River Commission
Office of the Secretary in Vientiane (OSV)
P.O Box 6150, 154 Fa Ngum Road Vientiane 01000, Lao PDR
Email: mrc@mrcmekong.org

Closing date for applications: 14 December 2015

The application should be sent to:
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The Australian Embassy has several vacancies, representing exciting career and learning opportunities. We are seeking experienced and highly motivated individual to work independently and as part of a small team, contributing to the Embassy’s work across the Lao PDR.

**To be successful in this role you will have:**

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- Fluency in both English and Lao languages, and strong written and oral communication skills in both languages.
- High level interpersonal, liaison and negotiations skills, and the ability to communicate effectively.
- An interest in, and understanding of, Australian society and culture.
- Work experience in a relevant environment, such as government, NGO or the private sector.

The Embassy is looking to fill two important positions: a Logistics Officer (Corporate) and a Logistics Manager (Corporate). The Australian Embassy is an equal opportunity employer - all applicants will be considered on their merit.

To apply for the position at the Australian Embassy, applicants must prepare a written response that directly address the selection criteria for the position. The position description and application instructions can be found on the Embassy’s website [www.laos.embassy.gov.au/vtan/aboutus.html](http://www.laos.embassy.gov.au/vtan/aboutus.html).

Applications must be submitted by 5.00pm Friday 18 December 2015. Applications that do not address the selection criteria will NOT be considered.
What’s On

Vang Vieng Boat Racing Festival

Vang Vieng district, Vientiane province, is hosting a boat racing festival this week. Information on the event can be obtained from the Head of Thatheua village, Mr Chanthai, on 020 9710 0571.

Where: Thatheua village, Vang Vieng district.

When: December 12.

Fang Mae Khong International Dance Festival 2015

Enjoy the Fang Mae Khong International Dance Festival 2015 performing at various locations.

Where and when: December 17-18, at French Institute, Vientiane 7pm featuring Duo Dance Contest December 20, at Vivanouk Gallery, Savannakhet province, 7:30pm.

For more information: 020 5226 2111, 020 7752 7911
Email: Fmdancecontest@gmail.com
Website: www.fmdfestival.org

Buddha image consecration ceremony

Merit makers can attend a Buddha image consecration ceremony at Khualuang village temple, on December 11. There will be also an almsgiving ceremony on the morning of December 12.

Where: Khualuang village temple, That Luang district, Vientiane.

When: December 11 at 7pm.

For more information: 020 9819 4644; 020 56521300; 020 9140 0091.

Cremation ceremony for the Most Venerable Dr Phamaha Phong Samaleuk

The cremation ceremony of the Most Venerable Dr Phamaha Phong Samaleuk will be held at That Luang square on December 20. There will be a special procession from That Luang temple to That Luang square. All interested people and devotees can take part in the ceremony.

Where: That Luang square, That Luang village, Xayseththa district.

When: December 20.

Invitation to join a convoy to Viengxay

The Tourism Promotion Department of the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism is inviting the public to take part in a convoy of vehicles that will travel to the birthplace of the revolution in Viengxay district, Huaphan province. The convoy will travel from Vientiane throughBonharmayak and Xiang Khong provinces before reaching Viengxay.

When: December 11-15.

Where: People who wish to take part are asked to register at Room No. 103 in the Tourism Information Centre on Lane Xang Avenue. Tel: Fax: 021 212248, mobile no. 08 7796 6976, 08 7796 6745.
Who: Those who do not have a vehicle are asked to register at Room No. 220 in the Lao Tourism Business Association. Tel: 021 243501. Mobile: 5551 6171 (Mr Saleum) or 2826 7182 (Mr Khone).

Opening times: Mon-Fri 8:30am-12 noon, 13:00-16:00; Saturday and Sunday 9am-15:00.

Christmas concert

Enjoy drinks and food at the Christmas concert by Thai artist Parn Taraphon.

When: December 25.

Where: Mix Restaurant & Bar, Nam Phou, Vientiane.
Call: 020 260 963, 020 5858 6464

Art and Drink Event

Artist, O Sleevi, has prepared a selection of intricate limited edition drawings to colour in while enjoying an evening of music and food company. Now booked out! Please keep expressing your interest, should any spots become available they’ll be offered to those on the waiting list.

Tickets: 100,000 Kip.

When: Saturday, December 12, 5:30pm-7pm.

Where: At i:cat gallery, Simeuang village.
For more information: icatgallery@gmail.com, call 020 7783 9674

Startup Weekend

A Startup Weekend will be conducted for young entrepreneurs this month in Vientiane over a fast paced 54 hours. Interested young people can register for 180, 000 kip each, 120, 000 for students before December 15.

When: December 18-20.

Where: American Centre, Thattham, Vientiane.
Registration at Tohlao Coworking Space & Service.
For more information: 030 532 9008, 020 7766 0082, email: info@tohlao.com
Website: Facebook: Startup Weekend Vientiane, Facebook: Tohlao Coworking Space & Service

Indian Scholarships

The Embassy of India in Vientiane provides scholarships for Lao students for both under graduate and post graduate courses in Indian universities, starting July 2016. Available courses: information technology, vocational training, business management, economics, archaeology, architecture, history and Buddhist studies. Applicants are required to have good knowledge of English.

When: Deadline for application submission is on December 20, 2015.

Where: Embassy of India in Vientiane. House No. 125, Unit 07, Saphanthong-kang village, Sisattanak district. Tel: 021 352201, Email: info@indianembassylao.org

Vientiane Times Culinary Challenge

Join us at a special live show by Thai solo artists and bands.

Where: Phoenix Night Club (formerly the Echo Pub) Vatnak village, Sisattanak district.

When: Band 25 Hours will play on November 9, while BANK Rock will perform on November 22.

For more information: 020 2273 7771, 02056055584.

Faculty of Agriculture 20th anniversary

Alumni from the Faculty of Agriculture, Nabong Campus are celebrating the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the faculty in Vientiane.

Where: Faculty of Agriculture, Nabong village, Xaythany district.

When: December 11

More information: 020 2224 0334, 021 870 046

Mini Vientianale Short Film Competition

Vientianale International Film Festival is hosting a short film competition. The competition is open to anyone currently living in Laos, regardless of nationality and level of filmmaking experience.

When: All films will be screened on the last day of the Mini Vientianale Film Festival in February 2016.

Contact: Email: festival@vientianalae.org
Call: 020 90353595 (Lao), 020 58891405 (Lao/English)

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Sepp Blatter at risk again from FIFA kickbacks scandal

FIFA president Sepp Blatter is at risk again from the World Cup bribery scandal that tarnished much of his FIFA presidency.

Switzerland’s justice ministry confirmed on Monday that American authorities formally asked for files in the ISL kickbacks case to aid its criminal investigations, and would not provide “all relevant information” until becoming president in 1998.

Back to the 1990s, Havelange had “full knowledge” written by Havelange and said alleging it had seen a letter before collapsing into criminal bankruptcy in 2001. British broadcaster the BBC aired a programme Monday alleging it had seen a letter obtained by the FBI that was written by Havelange and said Blatter had “full knowledge” of kickback payments in the 1990s. Blatter was Havelange’s general secretary for 17 years until becoming president in 1998.

Blatter would not comment on the BBC’s claims. His spokesman Klaus Stoehlker told The Associated Press on Monday.

FIFA said it is cooperating to provide “all relevant information” to ongoing American and Swiss investigations, and would not comment on specific allegations.

The ISL case sent FIFA into financial crisis, then dogged by investigations, and would not provide “all relevant information” until becoming president in 1998.

The BBC said it had obtained a letter from Havelange and received from an ISL source.

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More than 30 Lao coaches from various Vientiane clubs will be able to better instruct young footballers following a coaching seminar being delivered by the Japan Football Association from December 8-9.

Many Lao coaches are getting B and C level licenses from the Asian Football Confederation. The coaches are studying to develop their practical and theoretical knowledge under Japan Football Association representative Mr Shigeo Yamazaki.

The opening ceremony of the seminar was attended by Lao Football Federation’s Vice President Mr Pasith Souphab and a senior official from JICA Mr Kimura Hironori. The seminar is also helping commemorate the 60th anniversary of Laos-Japan diplomatic relations and 50th anniversary of JICA volunteers coming to Laos. Currently, JICA sends more than 800 Japanese volunteers to assist in many development areas such as sport, education, agriculture, society and other organisations in Laos.

Mr Pasith said the Lao Football Federation was happy to have the cooperation of the Japan Football Association and the local coaches were keen to take away important lessons from the coaching seminar.

This event is the first of its kind following the strategic alliance agreement with JICA, Japan Football Federation and the J-League. JICA selected football as the sport to build good relations with the hope that Lao coaches will be able to further develop the local game.

Mr Shigeo said the Japan Football Association had been able to develop its footballers to a skilful level, and at the same time, is able to exchange ideas with Lao coaches.

“During the seminar, we are able to show training methods and also the playing system of Japanese football teams and we would like to see Lao coaches be able to train local footballers to be as skilful as Japanese footballers,” Mr Shigeo said.