

Home news



Mr Ravic R. Huso shakes hands with local residents in Vangvieng district.

Hmong village hosts international visitors

PHAISYTHONG CHANDARA

International representatives this week visited two villages of Hmong people who are rebuilding their lives in Laos after returning to the country from Thai detention camps.

US Ambassador to Laos, Mr Ravic R. Huso, and UN High Commission for Refugees' regional representative, Mr Raymond Anthony Hall, were among the international representatives who took part in the event, organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

They visited Phalak village in Kasy district, which has a population of 462, and Phathao village in Vangvieng district, with a population of 1,556. Both villages are located in Vientiane province and are resettlement areas for Hmong people. Phathao village was founded in 1994

and Phalak village was established in 2006.

Phalak village Head, Mr Laopaosong Navongxay, told the visitors that most residents had sold their own land when they were lured to Thailand with promises of travelling outside of Southeast Asia.

He talked about the way they were allocated new land and how their living conditions had improved.

Mr Laopaosong said 90 percent of villagers were farmers who grew rice, cassava, sweetcorn, peas and other vegetables to guarantee a reliable food supply and extra income for their families.

He said development in the village had progressed at a steady pace and the residents now had access to a gravity-fed water supply, toilets and medical supplies.

"The main cause of our difficulties this year was bad weather. About two hectares of rice were destroyed and some villagers had low yields from their crops," he said.

Mr Laopaosong said about 95 percent of the improved irrigation systems were in place, and villagers were clearing plantation areas for new farming activities with the help of two tractors provided by the government.

All 116 school-aged children in Phalak village are enrolled in primary school, a huge increase from the 18 who enrolled in the first year of primary school last year.

The Lao delegation facilitating the visit was led by Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Head of Office, Mr Yaseng, and Lao-Thai General Border Committee member, Mr Yong Chanthalangsy.

Vietnamese rubber project needs 2,000 labourers in Savannakhet

SOMSACK PONGKHAO

A Vietnamese company needs almost 2,000 labourers to work on its rubber plantations in Savannakhet province, according to a local newspaper.

Savan Development Newspaper this week reported the Quasa-Geruco Joint Stock Company required the labourers to plant trees and care for existing trees.

Its plantations currently cover a total of 2,700 hectares in the districts of Phin and Xepon, and there are plans to plant an additional 3,000 hectares next year.

Provincial governor, Mr Vilayvanh Phomkhe, said it would be difficult for the company to attract 2,000 workers because many villagers were reluctant to undertake labouring work.

"Our population is big enough that we should be able to supply this amount of labour, but the problem is that our villagers are

used to working on their own farms with no pressure where they can have a break any time they want," he said.

"Working at the rubber plantation would mean they would have to follow rules set by the investor."

Provincial authorities plan to conduct training for villagers to explain the benefits of working at the plantation, where they would be paid a minimum of 25,000 kip per day.

"I accept that supplying labourers for this rubber project is difficult at this stage but I think it will be okay once villagers understand the situation," Mr Vilayvanh said.

"Our province wants them to work with the company as part of our efforts to increase employment and reduce poverty."

Mr Vilayvanh said the province may have to import foreign labourers to meet demand, but this would be done in consultation with the

government.

Critics say the government's '2+3' policy should be promoted around the country.

This requires investors to provide funding, training and a market and villagers to supply land and labour.

They say labouring on its own is not always a sustainable form of development.

About 10,000 hectares of Savannakhet province is allocated for rubber plantations and authorities plan to approve an additional 20,000 hectares for this purpose by 2015. In that year they will suspend approvals for plantations until they conduct an assessment measuring the positive and negative impacts of the industry.

The provinces of Xekong and Luang Namtha have stopped approving new rubber plantations in a bid to preserve land for other crops and ensure food security.

Vientiane, Kunming strengthen cooperation

VIENTIANE TIMES

Leaders from Vientiane and Kunming city in China have agreed to strengthen socio-economic cooperation efforts in the areas education and public health.

The agreement was reached at a meeting between Vientiane and Kunming officials during an official visit to Laos by a delegation led by member of the Standing Committee of Yunnan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and Party Secretary of Kunming Municipal Committee of the CPC, Mr Qiu He.

The visit by the delegation to Laos from December 7 to 10 aimed to enhance the friendly relations and comprehensive cooperation efforts between the two countries and the two municipalities.

The visit was in response to an invitation extended to Mr Qiu He by Party Central Committee Secretary and Vientiane Mayor, Mr Sombat Yaliyer.

After the meeting, the Kunming

delegation announced they were pleased to help fund the establishment of a Vientiane-Kunming Friendship Flower Garden in Vientiane as well as decoration efforts along the Kaysone Phomvihane and Souphanouvong roads in Vientiane as part of celebrations marking the 450th anniversary of Vientiane as the capital of Laos.

The two sides agreed to further encourage the implementation of existing memorandum of understandings on cooperation made between the two cities.

They agreed to continue annual exchange visits by high-ranking delegations and technical staff.

During his visit to Laos, Mr Qiu He also paid courtesy visits to Vice President, Politburo Member and Standing Member of the Party Central Committee Secretariat Mr Bounhang Vorachit, and Prime Minister and Politburo Member Mr Bouasone Bouphavanh.

Mr Qiu He invited Mr Sombat and his delegation to pay an official visit to Kunming in the coming year.

Weather forecasters warn northerners to keep warm

KHAMPHONE SYVONGXAY

Meteorology and Hydrology Department officials are warning everyone, especially people living in the northern provinces, to ward off flu and respiratory infections by wearing warm clothing.

A high pressure system brought cold air and northeast winds to all parts of the country yesterday, with thick fog and colder weather predicted for the middle of this month in northern and central provinces, a department official, Mr Vandy Douangphachanh, said yesterday.

The department believed temperatures this winter would be lower than last year due to the effects of climate change, he said.

There had been other changes to normal weather patterns this year, he said. As in Vietnam, the rainy season had begun much earlier than usual and lasted longer. In Laos the rainy season normally starts in the middle of May and ends in the middle of October but this year it began at the end of April and ended in November.

Already temperatures in some parts of Xieng Khuang province have dropped to 0 degrees and to 1 degree in Huaphan province.

December and January will be the coldest months of the winter, when temperatures below 0 degrees can be expected in some northern provinces.

It will get much warmer in February and March and temperatures will start to soar in April, Mr Vandy said.

In 1999, Vientiane experienced one of the coldest winters on record, with night-time temperatures dropping to 10 degrees, but Mr Vandy said he did not think it would be as cold this winter.

The department issued a forecast for the period from 7pm yesterday to 7pm today. In the northeast, skies will be clear during the day but there will be fog in the morning, with minimum temperatures ranging from 11-13 degrees and the maximum from 22-24 degrees.

The northwest of the country will have localised fog, with lows of 14-16 degrees and highs of 25-27 degrees.

In Vientiane, there will be widespread morning haze, with lows of 15-17 degrees and highs of 26-28 degrees.

In Xaysombound district, Vientiane province, there will be thick fog in the morning, with minimum temperatures of 6-8 degrees and highs of 22-24 degrees. In the south, there will be some cloud cover and early morning haze, with lows of 15-17 degrees and highs of 28-30 degrees.

In Pakxong district, Champassak province, there will be thick fog in the morning, with night-time temperatures of 11-13 degrees and highs of 20-22 degrees.

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