

Savannakhet to plant acacia and rubber for Arbor Day

□ PHONSAVANH VONGSAY

SAVANNAKHET province will begin planting acacia and rubber trees initially on 2,000 hectares of land on Arbor Day, June 1.

The trees will be planted in two districts, Phin and Xepon, with the support of the Vietnamese Quasa-Geruco Joint Stock Company.

Additional land will be cleared for the project, and eventually the plantation will cover an area of 8,650 hectares.

"We'll begin clearing the rest of the area when we complete the initial planting, and we expect to finish planting within four years," said a consultant from the company.

The area includes 740 hectares for the acacia and the rest for rubber.

"The project will cost about 180 billion kip (US\$18 million)," said the company's president, Mr Le Minh Chau, at the signing ceremony between the government and the company on Wednesday in Vientiane.

The project will include the construction of two factories for rubber processing and acacia grinding.

After two years, more factories will be built in Phin, and the processed rubber and ground acacia will be exported



Vice President of the Committee for Planning and Investment, Mr Thongmy Phomvixay (right), and President of the Quasa-Geruco Joint Stock Company, Mr Le Minh Chau.

to Vietnam.

The ground acacia will be used for plywood and pulp production.

"We won't know the size or capacity of these factories because we need to wait and see how many trees are planted," the consultant said.

The acacia trees will be large enough to harvest after five years, and the rubber trees

after seven years.

The government approved another acacia plantation project last month in Savannakhet province, which will be operated by another Vietnamese company.

The project is beginning trials this month, scheduled for completion in six months' time. The goal is to establish a plantation on an area covering

2,000 hectares.

The cost is roughly 4.8 billion kip (US\$500,000), and the company aims to export the products to China and Vietnam.

This company invested in a similar project in the province last year, planting about 20 hectares of acacia and cassava trees. The cassava has since been sold to markets in Vietnam.

Luang Namtha boosts border trade services

□ MANICHANH PANSIVONGSAY

AUTHORITIES in Luang Namtha province are promoting border trade services by organising a trade fair at the local Xiengkong checkpoint bordering Myanmar.

According to the Director of Provincial Industry and Commerce, Mrs Venghua Nabounpheng, the province organises the fair during the middle and the end of each month.

The programme began in 1991, aiming to exchanging goods along the border.

In the past, there have always been exchanges of goods over border areas, with people from Myanmar transporting goods by boat and trading on the bordering river.

The provincial authorities of Luang Namtha have now decided to open the fair to facilitate purchase and sale of local goods, Mrs Venghua Nabounpheng told Vientiane Times this week.

Myanmar people can enter the province to shop and trade goods at the fair through the local checkpoint, but they need to have their border passes ready for inspection.

She said authorities wouldn't place heavy taxes on traders, but they are required to pay immigration fees, a small fee for stall lease and daily income tax.

The trade fair will continue in line with the policy of provincial authorities.

A provincial authority said the province cannot open a permanent market in the area because local people are not yet able to produce enough goods, and the distance from the township is quite far. Most of the goods being traded at the fair are agricultural products, livestock and non-timber products.

"Not only local people and Myanmar vendors are bringing their produce from farms and forest areas to the fair, but Chinese people who live in the

province are also joining the event," Deputy Director of the department, Mr Khammy Phomphithak, said.

According to the department, Xiengkong is a focal development area of the province. The authorities have projected that it will try to develop the area as an economic development zone.

Now the province is operating an electricity network expansion project to bring power from the Nam Ngum hydropower dam in Vientiane province to the area. The project is expected to finish by 2008, according to

Mrs Venghua.

Clearing areas to build a road along Mekong River to the economic zone has already been completed. It is about 14 km long, travelling from the checkpoint, according to the Director of Communication, Transport, Post and Construction of the province, Mr Bounkhop Phommachanh.

The checkpoint is located in the West of the province and is about 140 km from the provincial capital.

Luang Namtha shares a border with two countries—China and Myanmar.

Oudomxay to boost soybean exports

□ PHAISYTHONG CHANDARA

to export.

THREE export and import companies operating in Oudomxay province are set to increase soybean exports to China by more than 300 tonnes this year.

The Deputy Director of the Agriculture and Forestry Promotion Centre of the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Department, Mr Somphong Savathdy told Vientiane Times yesterday that the companies exported 700 tonnes last year and expect to ship 1,000 tonnes this year.

Last year the Soukchaluen, Salika and Tha Oudom companies in Houn district bought about 300 to 500 tonnes of beans from local farmers. But this was not enough to meet demand, so they will attempt to buy more

In 2006 farmers planted soybeans on only 400 hectares, but this year the province expects to have about 500 hectares under cultivation for higher yields.

"We're trying to encourage more than 10,000 farmers in Houn and Baeng districts to expand their plantations," said Mr Somphong.

The three companies will buy soybeans from farmers for 3,000 kip per kilogramme before shipping the crop to companies in China.

The export of soybeans to China began in 2003, when only 200 tonnes were shipped, and has risen by 30 percent each year since then.

"Next year we plan to plant 600 to 700 hectares to increase yields even further," Mr Somphong said.



Workers load soybeans onto a truck for export.

Bus travel in Laos Standard fares

Distances	Price	VIP
Khuadin Bus Station		
Vientiane - Khammuan	40,000 k	110,000 k
Vientiane - Savannakhet	55,000 k	
Vientiane - Pakxe	85,000 k	
Vientiane - Saravan	100,000 k	
Vientiane - Xekong	100,000 k	
Vientiane - Attapeu	110,000 k	
Vientiane - Donkhone	110,000 k	
Vientiane - Donetalah	95,000 k	120,000k, 115,000k
Vientiane - Namthone	30,000 k	
Vientiane-Thakhaek	40,000 k	
Savannakhet - Pakxe	25,000 k	
Savannakhet - Saravan	40,000 k	
Savannakhet - Attapeu	60,000 k	
Pakse - Saravan	17,000 k	
Pakse - Xekong	25,000 k	
Pakse - Attapeu	35,000 k	
Vientiane - Borikhamxay	20,000 k	
Vientiane - Napong	85,000 k	
Vientiane - Vangvieng	20,000 k	
Vientiane - Kasi	30,000 k	
Vientiane - Nongkhai	15,000 k=55 Baht	
Vientiane - Oudon	22,000k =80 Thai Baht	US\$ 5 US\$ 9
Taxi Price	Airport - Morning market Airport - Friendship	
Bus fares from the Northern Transport Bus Station		
Vientiane - Oudomxay	110,000 k,	120,000k, 115,000k
Vientiane - Phongsaly	150,000 k	
Vientiane - Luang Namtha	140,000 k	
Vientiane - Bokeo	200,000 k	
Vientiane - Luang Prabang	90,000 k	
Vientiane - Xamneua	150,000 k	
Vientiane - Sayaboury	100,000 k	
Vientiane - Xieng Khuang	90,000 k	
Vientiane - Special Zone	70,000 k	
The bus leaves every day International destinations		
Vientiane - Meuang La		115,000k 100,000k
Vientiane - Se Mao		
Vientiane - Trung Tam		
Vientiane - Vinh		
Vientiane - Thanh Hoa		
Vientiane - Hanoi		
Vientiane - Hue		
Vientiane - Danang		
Vientiane - Saigon		
Vientiane - Bangkok		
The bus leaves every Thursday and Sunday for Chinese destinations and leaves every day for Vietnamese and Thai destinations.		

FOR MORE INFORMATION TEL 216507, 2402207

Exchange rates

As of May 10.

Banque pour le Commerce Exterieur Lao.

Foreign Currencies	Code	Unit : LAK			
		Buying Rates			Selling Rates
		Note	Bill	EFT	
US Dollar	USD 1-20	9,580	9,584	9,586	9,640
	USD 50-100	9,582			
Euro	EUR 1-20	12,459	12,464	12,469	13,381
	EUR 50-500	12,463			
Thai Baht	THB	276	276	277	278
Pound Sterling	GBP	18,145	18,145	18,150	19,700
Australian Dollar	AUD	7,655	7,655	7,660	8,222
Canadian Dollar	CAD	8,414	8,414	8,419	9,179
Japanese Yen	JPY	79	79	79.37	83
Swiss Franc	CHF	7,786	7,786	7,791	8,330
Renminbi Yuan	CNY	1,221	1,221	1,226	1,299
Danish Krone	DKK	-	-	1,723	1,815
Norwegian Krone	NOK	-	-	1,578	1,662
Swedish Krona	SEK	-	-	1,395	1,469
Singapore Dollar	SGD	-	-	6,257	6,590
HongKong Dollar	HKD	-	-	1,213	1,278
Vietnamese Dong	VND	-	-	0.593	0.624