

**IN BRIEF**

**Intel, PC makers broaden support for Chromebooks**

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — Another wave of laptop computers running on Google's Chrome operating system will be hitting stores this summer in the latest challenge to Microsoft's dominant Windows franchise. The latest line of Chromebooks unveiled Tuesday run on a new generation of faster Intel microprocessors that don't devour as much battery power. The machines will be shipped by major personal computer makers such as Lenovo Group, Acer, Dell, ASUS and Toshiba. They will sell for US\$300 to US\$400. The widening selection of Chromebooks reflects the building momentum for Google Inc.'s attempt to create a compelling alternative to Windows-powered machines and Apple Inc.'s Mac computers. Intel Corp. and all the PC makers embracing Chromebooks also are longtime Microsoft Corp. partners that helped make Windows so influential and lucrative during the past two decades.

**Delta approves US\$2 billion buyback; raises dividend**

ATLANTA (AP) — Delta Air Lines Inc.'s board of directors approved a plan to buy back more of its own stock and boost its quarterly dividend by 50 percent. The Atlanta airline says it will buy US\$2 billion of its shares by the end of 2016. It will raise its quarterly dividend to 9 cents per share from 6 cents per share starting in September. Delta says the plans will boost shareholder value. Buying back stock can help boost the company's share price and earnings per share. Its shares rose 25 cents to US\$37.80 in afternoon trading Tuesday after rising as high as US\$38.82, its highest level since emerging from bankruptcy in 2007.

**Barclays profits fall, hit by investment bank**

LONDON (AP) — Barclays PLC has posted a 5 percent fall in profits for the first three months of the year as earnings from its investment bank business slumped. The British bank said Tuesday that its adjusted pre-tax profits fell to 1.69 billion pounds (US\$2.87 billion). Barclays had warned last month that it would be hit by the performance of its investment bank division, which saw income from its fixed income, credit and commodities business fall by 41 percent. Barclays Chairman David Walker has hinted at a shrinking of the investment banking arm, potentially cutting thousands of jobs. However, the bank said its British retail and business banking arms performed well in the first quarter, with pre-tax profits up 20 percent to 360 million pounds.

**More foreign workers flow in amidst rising labour demand**

Ekaphone Phouthonesy

The government granted more work permits to foreign workers last year amid rising demand for a larger labour force to drive national economic development, according to a report from the Lao National Economic Research Institute. The institute released its latest economic outlook recently, showing that the government granted work permits to 5,663 foreign workers in 2013 as part of efforts to secure the manpower needed by an increasing number of foreign investment projects.

About 54 percent of the workers which received the work permits were from China. A further 26 percent were from Thailand, 5 percent were from Vietnam and the rest were from other countries, including Australia and South Korea. Most of the imported workers are employed by foreign investment projects such as hydropower, dam construction and mining operations, all of which require high-level skills that are in short supply in Laos.

The government has revised the Labour Law, giving cabinet the power to allow the recruitment of more foreign workers if necessary, aiming to secure a sufficient supply of workers and satisfy the demands of various investment and development projects.

Under the previous law, a company was allowed to employ foreign workers equivalent to not more than 10 percent of the total workforce, aiming to prioritise jobs for Lao people.

But an insufficient supply of domestic workers forced the government to revise the

law. A number of foreign companies said they were facing difficulties recruiting workers despite the high working-age population. They urged the government to put measures in place to ensure they could find enough sufficiently skilled personnel to staff their business operations.

A garment factory in Vientiane Industry Park, some 21 kilometres outside the capital told *Vientiane Times* it needed more than 100 labourers. The company searched for workers in the villages surrounding the factory but faced difficulties as there were not many young people living in the area.

A large number of Lao people seek employment in Thailand, which offers higher wages, causing a shortage in the supply of labourers willing to work in Laos. Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment Mr Somchit Inthamith said the government was paying greater attention to education reform so it could supply skilled workers to meet the demands of foreign investment projects.

Observers have said the number of foreign workers in Laos was much higher than the figure quoted by the government and relaxed enforcement of the immigration law has created opportunities for foreign workers from neighbouring countries to work and do business in Laos. They said the government should register all foreign workers so as they have data on exactly who is working or doing business in Laos, enabling better management and also facilitating the collection of income tax.



Deputy Prime Minister, Somsavat Lengsavad (centre) joins the groundbreaking ceremony for Nam Chien Hydropower project in Xieng Khuang province last weekend.

**Construction of Nam Chien hydropower project begins**

Times Reporters

A groundbreaking ceremony for the construction of Nam Chien Hydropower project was held last weekend in Xieng Khuang province and will hopefully be completed by the end of 2018.

Nam Chien hydropower plant project is valued at US\$250 million and stretches from Keosed village in Khoun district, Xieng Khuang province to Samkothong village in Thathom district, Xaysomboun province.

The newly proposed state-owned investment project will be implemented by Electricite du Laos (EDL) with China Gezhouba Group International Engineering Company Limited as project developer.

EDL Managing Director, Mr Sisavath Thiravong speaking at the ceremony said the hydropower plant would be equipped with an installed capacity of 104 MW and is

expected to generate over 450 million KWh of electrical power annually.

"Nam Chien hydropower plant is one of the government's prioritised policies and it is also in line with the strategic plan 2013-18 of EDL and the government to provide people of the two provinces and other northern parts of Laos with access to electricity," he said.

Deputy Prime Minister Somsavat Lengsavad, Governor of Xieng Khuang province, Prof. Somkot Mangnemek, Minister of Energy and Mines, Mr Soulivong Daravong, representatives of the Chinese Embassy in Laos and Xaysomboun authorities were present at the ceremony.

According to a senior official from the Ministry of Energy and Mines, EDL is beefing up implementation of the government policies by investing in the installation of transmission lines, building substations and other

necessities to ensure rural people have access to electricity and to meet the government timeline of covering 90 percent of Lao families by 2020.

By 2015-16 almost 20 power projects will have been completed with an installed capacity of around 4,000 MW. Currently a total of 23 projects have been successfully completed with an installed capacity of more than 3,200 MW.

The country is building a number of hydropower plants in the hope of providing sufficient electricity for domestic consumption, however the government has also asked members of the public to use electrical energy economically, especially firms in commercial production.

By doing so the government will be able to decrease its payments for purchasing electricity from neighbouring countries and as a result domestic electrical bills may be cheaper.



Foreign workers at a construction site in Vientiane.



**Vientiane Times on CD-ROM**

Issues of Vientiane Times from 2001 to March 2014 have been recorded on CD-ROM. Now available at Vientiane Times office, Corner Sethathirath/Pangkham Roads, Nam Phu, Vientiane. P.O. Box: 5723, Tel: (856-21) 216364, 217593. Fax: (856-21) 216365 Email: [itvtimes@gmail.com](mailto:itvtimes@gmail.com)

**SACOMBANK BUILDING**

OFFICE SPACE FOR RENT

- \* 24 hours Security System
- \* Large Parking
- \* Power 24/24
- \* Located in The Commercial Area

044 Haing Boun Road, Maitok Village, Chamthabouly District, Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR

Mr. Kungvilay PHANNOUVONG

Tel: 020 5674 0681  
021 265726-309

Fax: 021 265725

E-mail: [kungvilay@sacombank.com](mailto:kungvilay@sacombank.com)

website: [www.sacombank.com.la](http://www.sacombank.com.la)