

IN BRIEF

GM to sink US\$14 billion into China over five years

BEIJING (China Daily, ANN) -- General Motors is to invest US\$14 billion in China over the next five years and open five new manufacturing plants to increase annual sales in the world's largest car market to nearly 5 million vehicles. The company's plans for China also include introducing 60 new models or revamped vehicles, including nine new models from its flagship luxury brand Cadillac, GM Chief Executive Officer Mary Barra said on Wednesday.

Argentine stocks plunge after central banker quits

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina (AP) -- Argentina's Merval stock index plunged just over 7 percent on Thursday in a sell-off sparked by the naming of a new central bank chief who many believe will favour interventionist policies. Traders expect new central banker Alejandro Vanoli will order even more restrictive currency controls in trying to stem capital flight and boost Argentina's frail economy.

Lenovo completes takeover of X86 server business from IBM

BEIJING (Xinhua) -- Lenovo Group, the world's biggest personal computer maker, has finished the acquisition of the X86 server hardware and related maintenance services business from IBM, Lenovo said late Thursday. In a statement filed to the Hong Kong stock exchange, the Beijing-based PC maker said it paid US\$1.847 billion in cash and allotted 182 million Lenovo shares to IBM for the takeover. Within one year from October 1, IBM is restricted from offering, selling, transferring or otherwise disposing of the 182 million shares, according to the statement.

WB forecasts Ukrainian economy to drop 8 pct in 2014

KIEV (Xinhua) -- The World Bank (WB) on Thursday revised its forecast for Ukraine's economic performance this year, expecting its gross domestic product (GDP) to decline by 8 percent. The downward revision, from the 5 percent fall projected in June, was attributed to the impact of the conflict in eastern Ukraine, where government troops are clashing with independence-seeking insurgents.

Construction set to commence on new power plant in Champassak



Namphak Power Co Ltd Director, Mr Ashwin Devineni (left), shakes hands with Deputy Minister of Planning and Investment, Mr Bounthvy Sisouphanthong, after signing the agreement.

Times Reporters

The construction of the Nam Phak hydropower plant project in Champassak province will start this year after the developers signed the concession agreement (CA) with the Lao government last Thursday.

"Currently the developers are asking to start construction preparation, including the installation of transmission lines to the project site and the dormitories," an official from the Energy and Mines Ministry's Energy Business Department said at the CA signing ceremony.

The agreement was signed between Namphak Power Co Ltd and the Ministry of Planning and Investment, attended by officials from the Japanese and Indian embassies to Laos.

The project construction is expected to be carried out over a period of 48 months while the commercial operation date (COD) is scheduled for October 1, 2021, according to a handout.

Once construction is

complete, the project will have an installed capacity of about 150 megawatts (MW); and the generated electricity will be sold to Electricite du Laos (EDL).

The Namphak Power Co Ltd will have a concession period of 27 years, starting from the COD.

The project cost is estimated at more than 1.94 trillion kip (US\$243.20 million) to be invested by three shareholders, including Kobe Green Power Co Limited from Japan, which holds 15 percent, Electricite du Laos, which holds 15 percent and Nava Bharat Lao Energy Pte Ltd from Singapore, which holds the bulk of the shares at 70 percent.

Funding for the project's construction is expected to be provided in the form of sponsors equity and project finance debt with a target ratio of 70 percent debt and 30 percent equity, the handout noted.

Laos now has 24 operational power plants, from 1MW upwards, with a total installed capacity of 3,250MW. Combined, these are generating

more than 16,100GWh of electricity annually for local and export markets.

The 24 plants include 14 under the management of independent power producers that have a combined installed capacity of about 2,859.6MW and 10 plants under the management of EDL, which have a combined installed capacity of more than 390MW.

The Lao government is actively promoting renewable energy development, including the nation's hydropower resources to increase electricity production and supply power for both domestic use and export to neighbouring countries.

Minister of Energy and Mines Mr Soulivong Daravong highlighted at the 29th Asean Ministers on Energy Meeting held in Brunei in 2011 that Laos can help Asean countries to reduce their use of fossil fuels, which are the main source of greenhouse gas emissions and importantly can help Asean to stabilise its power supply.

Shanghai Tower reaches for sky and record

SHANGHAI (China Daily, ANN) -- Skyscrapers have been sprouting up around China in recent years on an unprecedented scale with more in the making, and the country is expected to host six of the world's 10 tallest buildings by 2020.

The 632-metre Shanghai Tower will become China's tallest building and the world's second-tallest after the 828-metre Burj Khalifa Tower in Dubai.

Located in Lujiazui, Shanghai's financial zone, the skyscraper, to be completed in 2015, will not hold the title for long.

Zhongnan Centre, in Suzhou in Jiangsu province, is planned to be more than 700 metres high, according to the city's urban planning department.

In Wuhan, capital city of Hubei province in Central China, a 1,000-metre-tall twin tower has been designed and, if approved by the government, will be erected in 2018.

"There is no end to the competition for the tallest building. For many developers and investors, it is a game

Buildings and Urban Habitat, said skyscrapers reflect a city's aspiration and competence.

"If you look at the names of the towers, you'd see the changes," said Wood.

In the past, a tower was usually named after an enterprise such as the Rockefeller Center in New York or Jin Mao Tower in Shanghai. Now they are called Shanghai Tower, Wuhan Centre and Canton Tower, said Wood.

However, some analysts and market insiders have expressed concerns about an oversupply of such tall buildings in some metropolises, especially those cities with less experience of managing such buildings.

"Some second- or lower-tier cities face risks of an oversupply," said Frank Chen, head of China research at CBRE.

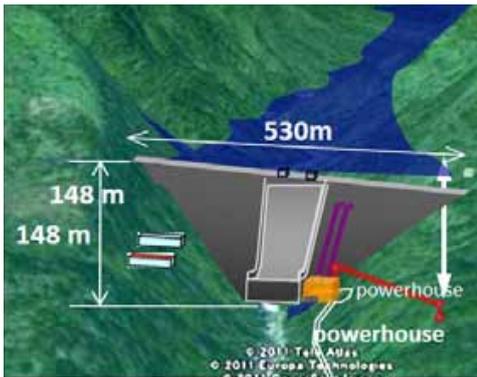
He noted some cities are only regional centres and do not have much appeal to attract tenants.

Andy To, executive director of asset services at CBRE China, said many of the developers in emerging markets believe that once the super-tall buildings are built, tenants will eventually

The 632-meter Shanghai Tower (right), located in Lujiazui, Shanghai's financial zone, is scheduled for completion in 2015.



Work on Nam Ngiep 1 hydropower plant commences this month



An artistic impression of the Nam Ngiep 1 hydropower project in Borikhamxay and Xaysomboun provinces.

Bounfaeng Phaymanivong

The 290 megawatt Nam Ngiep 1 hydropower plant is set to start construction this month, with power production scheduled for early 2019, following the finalisation of the financial backing for the project last month, according to the company.

The company's website stated that the financial support for the project was completed in the second week of September this year with different backers -- the Asian Development Bank, Japan Bank for the International Cooperation (JBIC), Bangkok Bank and other banks from Japan and Thailand.

The cost for the project is

around US\$916 million with social and environmental costs budgeted at US\$52.5 million.

Prior to the construction of the hydropower plant, the company met with the appropriate government sector in Vientiane last Friday to officially launch the Biodiversity Offset and Watershed Management programme, to make sure the environment is well-protected and managed.

Deputy Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment Ms Bounkham Vorachit co-chaired the meeting and said the protection of biodiversity and watershed management are priorities to lessen any negative impacts on the environment.

Deputy Governor of

Xaysomboun province Mr Laopaosong Navongxay, Deputy Managing Director of the company Mr Kasem Chudthong and other invited guests attended the meeting.

A watershed management committee in charge of overseeing environmental protection in the project areas of Borikhamxay and Xaysomboun provinces was also announced at the meeting.

The Nam Ngiep 1 Power Company (NNP1) is jointly owned by KPIC Netherlands, a subsidiary of Japan's Kansai Electric Power, with 45 percent of the shares, EGAT International of Thailand with 30 percent and Lao Holding State Enterprise with the remaining 25 percent.

This 290 MW project with a generating capacity of 1,620 GWh per annum has entered an agreement to sell the majority of its production to Thailand with the balance being sent to the national power grid.

According to the company, the main dam and power station will generate 272 MW of power for export to Thailand.

About 6km downstream from the main dam, the re-regulating dam and power station will generate 18 MW of electricity for sale to Electricite du Laos (EDL) for contribution to the domestic grid. The project has a concession period of 27 years and once the concession period has ended, the plant will be transferred entirely to ownership by the Lao government.

of the taller the better," said Zhang Yuanzhi, project agent in Shanghai." A tall building embodies power - both architectural and financial."

Skyscrapers have been sprouting up around China in recent years on an unprecedented scale.

By 2020, China should have six of the world's top 10 skyscrapers, according to the Chicago-based Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, a nonprofit organisation that focuses on the planning, design, construction and operation of tall buildings.

China will dominate global super-tall building development in the next five years. Its number of such buildings - more than 200 metres high and with more than 40 stories - will account for 70 percent of world's total, according to a report by realty service provider CBRE Inc.

CBRE said about 51 percent of China's super-tall buildings are in second-tier cities, including Shenyang in Liaoning province and the municipalities of Chongqing and Tianjin.

Antony Wood, executive director of the Council on Tall

come but in many cases it does not turn out to be the case.

The many aspects of a city's condition - business environment, tax rates, market transparency, government efficiency, infrastructure, communications and human resources - are all important factors in an authority deciding whether the city needs many tall buildings, said To.

Sophie Lo, a department director at a company in one of the super-tall buildings in Lujiazui, said she likes to work in such a place.

"The prestigious location indeed helps the business as people believe that a company that can pay rents usually 30 percent higher than other office buildings must be financially secure," said Lo.

Li Zhijie, who works on the 40th floor of a building that used to be one of the tallest buildings in the Lujiazui area decades ago, sees some disadvantages.

"The bad thing is that you feel isolated working in a tall building," said Li. "Dining in the neighbourhood is often quite expensive. The cost of being in a prestigious location is not low."