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PM stresses better tourism management in Vangvieng

Times Reporters

Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong yesterday asked local authorities to take greater action to manage tourism-related businesses and activities in Vangvieng district, one of Laos's most well-known tourist destinations located in Vientiane province.

The premier made the suggestion following some recent tourism-related issues that resulted in the government's decision to form a task force committee to reinforce local authority and manage the problems more

effectively.

The issues include drug abuse by visitors, setting up entertainment venues without business licenses, serving unhygienic drinks mixed with hallucinogenic mushrooms and operating unsafe flying fox swings.

In the speech yesterday, Premier Thongsing stated that local authorities have failed to fulfill their mandate to manage the tourism industry effectively, which has triggered the issues that have arisen.

The development of some tourism sites, resorts for instance, the Prime Minister

said, have been set up without permission but local authorities did not step in to intervene. "Local authorities knew this, but did nothing. They didn't dare to bring up the issue and take measures to address it," he told the meeting, which was attended by local authorities including the Vientiane provincial governor.

He continued by saying that hotels, guesthouses and even resorts have been built in an unorganised manner making management more difficult. The premier said local authorities have been unable to manage the

problems and suggested they work to improve the matter.

"This demonstrates that the action of local authorities has not been effective and decisive," he said. "These weak points have been the cause of many problems."

The Party and government have been concerned about the issues, the premier said. As a result, a task force has been formed to help local authorities to address the issues in order to rebuild Vangvieng as a natural and beneficial tourist attraction.

Since its mission began early this month, the task

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Govt stresses on improvement of the road network for Asean integration

Times Reporters

Improvements to the road network linking Laos with its neighbours will be a high priority of the government, according to Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong recently.

Without an improvement to the road network, Laos will lose income that should come from land transport services, being a country surrounded by five others, China, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Myanmar.

"The standard of our roads currently lags behind those of our neighbours," the PM told a meeting of public works and transport officials in Vientiane last week.

The PM said the government is very concerned about poor conditions in Laos as the ASEAN Economic Community is coming closer to establishment in 2015.

"We need to think together how we can work well with the rest of the region. I think that we need to upgrade our roads to the same level as our neighbours so that we won't lose out on the benefits from regional integration."

Laos is a land-locked country so the government has developed a policy to transform the country from 'land-locked' to a 'land-linked' nation intending to promote trade, investment and the tourism industry in the country as well as to facilitate the transport of Lao goods to international markets.

The road network is the main system for transport in Laos where traders carry

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Xekong set to see two new dams constructed

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Over US\$ 400 million will be invested in the construction of two hydropower dams in Xekong province, which once complete are expected to generate electricity to meet future demand in central and southern Laos.

Work will now commence on the Xekong 3 and Xekhaman 4 projects after the project development agreement was signed off by the Lao government and Vietnamese investors in Vientiane on Monday.

Director General of the Song Da Corporation Mr Duong Khanh Toan. Duong Khanh Toan said at the ceremony that the project was agreed to by the government of Laos in line with the economic cooperation agreements between the Lao and Vietnamese governments. Therefore, the projects are now proceeding to aid development in the province, he said.



Dr Bounthavy Sisouphanthong (right) shakes hands with Tran Van Tuan after the signing an agreement to develop the Xekong 3 project.

According to the report, both projects are a joint venture between the Song Da Corporation and the Viet-Lao Power Joint Stock Company. Once complete, it is believed they will generate more than 1.1 billion kwh of electricity per year, which will shore up electricity supplies in central and southern Laos.

Mr Toan explained that Song Da Corporation

established the Viet-Lao Power Joint Stock Company to study hydropower investment in Laos five years ago.

Since then they have worked hard conducting feasibility studies at various sites, and the first two projects the company completed were Xekhaman 1 and Xekhaman 3.

Laos plans to become the battery of Asean, as it has

abundant water supplies and mountainous terrain suited to hydropower development. Asean member countries and the world community should support this policy as the move will not only help the regional community get clean, low carbon energy but also help Laos to liberate itself from poverty.

According to a study by the Ministry of Energy and Mines, the country has the potential to build more than 70 hydropower plants with a combined installed power generation capacity of about 28,000 MW. Today, Laos has built only 14 hydropower plants with an installed capacity of 2,500 MW.

One of the biggest dams which Laos plans to build is the Xayaboury dam, the first run-of-the-river dam on the lower Mekong.

The dam does not store a large amount of water and is designed to ensure a fish passage level of 85 percent, in accordance with MRC guidelines.

Announcement

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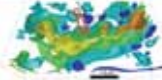


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