

Govt, business sector discuss AEC readiness

Bounfaeng Phaymanivong

A meeting aiming was held in Vientiane yesterday to seek appropriate solutions to challenges and problems that business sectors are facing, especially in preparation of the Asean Economic Community (AEC).

The meeting was co-chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Thongloun Sisoulith.

Mr Thongloun called for the public and private sectors to intensively work together and strengthen cooperation in relation to the preparations for the AEC in 2015.

The meeting entitled 'Enhancing preparation for the Asean Economic Community (AEC)' allowed participants to discuss what challenges Lao enterprises have been facing, along with the implementation of AEC connectivity.

"The AEC is just like a battlefield where all Asean members gather for



Mr Thongloun Sisoulith co-chairs the meeting in Vientiane yesterday.

a competition in the business sector. That's why Laos has to be in a good position and ensure that we are able to compete with our trade partners,"

Mr Thongloun said.

There is just about a year remaining for many of the Asean member countries; however Laos still

needs more time to improve several fields of requirement such as skilled labourers, legal systems and human resource development.

"We [the public and private sectors] gather today to openly discuss challenges and other obstacles that the business sector is currently experiencing in order to seek a proper solution," Mr Thongloun said.

Several different sectors spoke about their current situation in their business operations, with senior government officials also present to explain about line policies, regulations and other measures to support the business sector.

The day-long meeting was co-hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, as well as the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism and the Lao National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LNCCI).

Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism Prof. Dr Bosengkham Vongdara, Minister of Industry

and Commerce Ms Khemmani Pholsena and LNCCI President Mr Sisavath Thiravong along with other senior government officials and businesspeople were present at the meeting.

"When looking at our situation, we are currently on an Asean airplane, its engine is switched on and heading to the take off area. Figuratively speaking this means that we have to be ready to fly together with other Asean members," Mr Thongloun said.

"It is time for us to show them our strengths and uniqueness to compete with other countries," he said, expressing his confidence that every issue and challenge the business sector was facing would be solved and its goals would be accomplished as well.

The community of Asean nations is based on three pillars, which the day-long meeting was also briefed on, including the Asean Political-Security Community, AEC and the Asean Socio-Cultural Community.

Construction of Hongsa power plant going smoothly

Phonsavanh Vongsay

Energy investor Lao Holding State Enterprise (LHSE) has reported that, as at the end of June, construction of the Hongsa Mine-Mouth Power Project in Hongsa district, Xayaboury province, was 87.7 percent complete.

"The project is only 0.3 percent behind plan," the LHSE General Manager Dr Somboune Manolom reported at the biannual meeting of the enterprise on Tuesday in Vientiane.

"The project has so far cost more than 17.55 trillion kip (US\$2.19 billion), which is 79 percent of the total projected cost of over 28.93 trillion kip (US\$3.71 billion)," Dr Somboune said.

The Hongsa mine-mouth power project will begin energy generation in 2015. It is the largest power plant to be built in Laos, and will have an installed capacity of 1,878 megawatts.

Dr Somboune said the 87.7 percent completion included construction of the powerhouse which was 89.1 percent complete, the 500kV and 115kV transmission lines and substation were 99.97 percent complete; and the two dams on Nam Leuak and Nam Kaen for use by the

project, plus pipeline systems were 99.9 percent complete.

With regard to the coal mining side of the project, the overburden sub pit was 83.6 percent complete; and the overburden main pit and construction of a coal stockyard and infrastructure were 100 percent finished.

Dr Somboune said the power plant, which started construction in October 2009 in Hongsa district, is expected to start commercial operations in 2015. The generator units 1 and 2 will begin electricity generation in May and October next year and unit 3 will start in February 2016.

The plant will have an installed capacity of 1,878 megawatts (MW) to generate energy of about 12,582GWh annually for the Lao and Thai markets.

LHSE was set up by the government in February 2005 to facilitate investment in energy generation, and it holds a 20 percent share in the Hongsa power plant.

The Thai Ratchaburi Electricity Generating Holding Public Company owns a 40 percent shareholding in the project, while Banpu Power Ltd of Thailand owns the remaining 40 percent.

Laos has now got 24 operational power plants, from one megawatt



The Hongsa Mine-Mouth Power Project is under construction in Xayaboury province.

upwards, with a total installed capacity of 3,250.3MW. Combined, these are generating more than 16,100GWh 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 Electricite du Laos (EDL), which have a combined installed capacity of more than 390MW.

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Foreign Currencies	Buying	Selling
US Dollar 50-100	8,036	8,060
Thai Baht	250.85	252.11
Euro 50-500	10,708	10,761