



Thousands of devotees of Vientiane and the provinces gathered early at That Luang esplanade in Vientiane on Wednesday to give alms and present offerings to monks for the occasion of the That Luang Festival. --Photo Khamphan

## Thousands pay homage to That Luang stupa

### Times Reporters

Crowds of well-dressed women wearing silk skirts and blouses, and men supporting belts waited patiently yesterday morning to present offerings to monks at the end of the That Luang Festival.

Devotees had more space than last year to put offerings into monks' bowls, after concerned authorities announced to safekeep areas at That Luang esplanade for celebrating the Lao National Day next week.

"It is more convenient than last year, because devotees have more space to walk and sit when waiting to give

their offerings to the monks, when last year everything was crowded and there were a lot of booths" a resident of Saphanthong Tai village, Ms Nivanda said.

She agrees that product booths should be placed outside the That Luang Stupa, to provide more space for festival-goers and almsgiving.

"This year, everyone saved a lot of time as they had more space to walk and give offerings, and monks placed their bowls on long tables in the four corners of the esplanade, which made the whole process a lot smoother," Ms Nivanda explains.

The monks began receiving

offerings from 5am, with the roads leading to the stupa packed with thousands of almsgivers.

Many people arrived early

at the esplanade to try to avoid the crowds.

Devotees filled silver bowls for the monks and paid homage

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## Govt approves laws for further debate at NA

### Times Reporters

Cabinet members have discussed and approved various laws at the government's monthly meeting before submitting these pieces of legislation to the upcoming session of the National Assembly for debate.

The meeting held on November 24 was chaired by Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong and attended by other cabinet members.

During the proceedings, four draft amended laws were endorsed in regards to the state investment, state budget, taxation and the government.

But the cabinet members did not approve the draft amended Law on Local Administration because it was still unclear and not comprehensive enough to reflect the reality of the nation in the new era.

The Law on Local Administration was promulgated in 2003, but the government thought that it was necessary to amend it in order to better define the roles, structures and styles of working by local authorities to



Prime Minister Thongsing Thammavong.

strengthen local administration while ensuring transparency and the continued growth of the country's economy.

The amendment of the State Investment Law aimed to oversee the investment of state development projects to ensure the efficiency, effectiveness and transparency of the projects while responding to socio-economic development and the improvement of the livelihoods of local people.

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## Swiss improves mother and child health

### Times Reporters

The Swiss-Lao Hospital Project has presented medical equipment worth about US\$1 million to the Mother and Newborn Hospital, aimed at improving the health of mothers and their children in the years to come.

Acting Director General of the Mother and Newborn Hospital, Associate Prof. Dr Bounleua Oudavong, said yesterday that the new

equipment provided by the project will develop the standard of medical services for mothers and newborns when they seeking services at the hospital.

"The Swiss assistance also supports the Ministry of Health's policy to cut the mortality rate of mothers and children throughout the country," she said.

President of the Swiss-Lao Hospital Project, Dr Urs

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# Patriotism, Sam Sang delivering development progress



Mr Bounnhang Vorachit delivers the report at the meeting.

## Somxay Sengdara

The rate of poor families in the country is now about 6.5 percent, while other indicators have also reflected good progress in the development process.

The declining poverty rate and development indicators were revealed at a meeting opened in Vientiane yesterday to disseminate the results of the campaign for patriotism enhancement and building of developed villages, and the translation of the Sam Sang (Three Builds) directive into meaningful practice.

President Choummaly Sayasone, and other high-ranking Party and government leaders and members attended the meeting.

Vice President Bounnhang Vorachit, who is also Head of the leading committee for

the Sam Sang pilot delivered the report on results from implementing the campaign and the pilot project over the past three years.

According to the report, the rate of families living under the poverty line was about 6.5 percent, the number of poor villages dropped to 1,736 or equalling 20.5 percent of the approximately 8,400 villages throughout the country, while 47 villages had become townships as socio-economic service centres in rural areas. Only 23 districts were left in poverty status.

"The achievements have significantly contributed to securing strong political stability, peace and safety, persistently stable economic growth, ensuring the national socio-economic development and MDGs targets have been achieved," it said in the report.

After the Politburo issued the resolution no.03 on the Sam Sang directive in late 2013, the committee announced the campaign for enhancing patriotism and building of developed villages, pushing the Sam Sang into further practice to greet the two historical dates of the 60th anniversary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, and the 40th anniversary of the Lao PDR.

In this regard, the Party and government have set targets for the rate of poor families to be below 10 percent, the rate of developed villages to be above

50 percent, and MDGs to be achieved by this year.

According to the report, as of this year over 84 percent of villages throughout the country had roads that ensured year-round travel, more than 91 percent of villages had clean water, and 87 percent had electricity.

Concerning social-cultural development, the net enrolment at primary school reached 100 percent with citizens of all ages declared to be able to read and write to the level of grade 5. Meanwhile, 42 districts and one province (Xayaboury) declared that all their citizens had reached the equivalent of lower secondary school level.

The country has 993 dispensaries, 5,000 villages have pharmaceutical kits, 102 districts have health funds for poor people, and free midwife services have been implemented at 62 dispensaries in 7 provinces.

"All these have created the conditions for the rate of poor people in rural areas accessing health services reaching 94.1 percent," the report said.

From their achievements, more than 2,400 villages, more than 2,600 families, more than 7,400 developers, and 96 entrepreneurs were selected as outstanding role models in this regard.

The award ceremony will take place at today's session of the meeting.

# Govt limits spending on new buildings

## Somsack Pongkhao

Economists have supported the government's decision to restrict its budget for the construction of new buildings to house public offices in Vientiane and provinces for the 2015-16 fiscal year.

A senior economist from the National Economic Research Institute Dr Leeber Leebouapao told *Vientiane Times* recently that the budget should shift to other priority projects including poverty reduction activities.

"I agree with the government that our budget for 2015-16 fiscal year should focus on poverty reduction, road construction and other facilities as well as debt payment so that the government won't face rising debt problems in the future," he said.

"What I have learned is that many provinces sought a budget from the government to build new buildings in their localities despite the fact that their existing buildings are still big enough to house their officials."

Dr Leeber said building more public offices could mean that the government would

have to spend more money on executive equipment including air-conditioning and other expenses. This kind of spending offered little in the way of return on investment.

In contrast, investment in productivity including agriculture production and the construction of factories can result in greater returns and generate income for local people.

Over the past years, the government spent its budget in large amounts on the construction of new buildings, aiming to create a better environment for officials to work. This sort of expenditure is unsustainable over the longer term.

According to the government report, revenue collection for 2015-16 fiscal year is set at 26,159 billion kip, of which 23,613 billion kip will be domestic revenue and the rest will be sourced from ODA.

Meanwhile, national budget expenditure for the 2015-16 fiscal year is set for 31,946 billion kip, of which around 9,800 billion kip of the total figure will be spent on paying the salaries and allowances of state officials

while another 6,209 billion kip will be allocated towards paying debts.

Nevertheless, the budget deficit will remain a greater challenge for the government as national revenue is unable to respond to the demand for expenditure. This means the government has to seek more funding from other sources including asking for loans from other countries to fill in the budget deficit.

The revenue shortfall in Laos has occurred for several years. One of the main factors behind the shortfall was that many companies (both small and large) have tried to avoid paying taxes to the government via various means. Another factor was financial leakages, which if not addressed could bring greater damage to the nation, while income from the mining sector has declined as a result of the falling prices of commodities on the world market.

The revenue shortfall has also resulted in the slow payment of officials' salaries and affected development projects in Laos over the past years.

# Respected elderly discuss socio-economic development of Laos

## Khonesavanh Latsaphao

The Lao Front for National Construction declared yesterday they got ready for the nationwide meeting of respected elderly people in Vientiane from November 28-30.

Their gathering is part of activities to mark the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the foundation of the Lao People's Democratic Republic early next month.

Vice President of Lao Front for National Construction, Mr Vongchanh Phomsavat, stated that so far the preparations for the meeting are finished.

Over 1,400 people from across the country will gather, among those 50 people are representatives of 49 ethnicities throughout Laos.

"This nationwide meeting of respected elderly people is to solidify the unity of all people," he pointed out.

The delegates will conduct an evaluation of party resolutions on the government's policies for the multi-ethnic people and community development.

The delegation will also invite high level officials of the Party and state, including leaders from the Lao Front for National Construction.

The Lao Front for National Construction leaders will explain to them about the Party and government's policies on attracting investment to remote areas to boost development and generate job opportunities for locals.

The delegation will also visit a number of places, including the project on the social-economic development in Vientiane.

They will then go on to attend the official ceremony of the 40th anniversary of the Lao PDR on December 2 in Vientiane

where some 15,000 people will be joining 48 parades and another 4,000 people performing in five main programmes.

The respected elderly joining the group will be senior people of different ethnic groups, veterans, senior officials and other respected people who play influential roles in local communities.

Over the past 40 years, Laos has seen rapid growth when it comes to socio-economic development and poverty reduction. Between 1981 and

1985, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew on average by 5.5 percent annually, but the figure rose to an average of 8.2 percent per annum between 2011 and 2013.

The livelihoods and income of Lao people have been improved over time. For instance, in 1985 average GDP per capita was reported at US\$114, rising to US\$211 in 1990, US\$1,069 in 2010 and to US\$1,490 in 2013. Average GDP per capita was US\$1,672 in 2014 and US\$1,857 in 2015.

# Swiss improves... FROM PAGE 1



Dr Urs Lauper (left) shakes hands with Associate Prof. Dr Bounleua Oudavong after handing over the equipment.

Lauper, said the project will continue to improve mother and child health in Laos as the project has signed to continue assistance until 2017.

In addition, the project will also help to improve medical skills for paediatricians and neonatal specialists throughout the country and provide technical skills training for medical staff at those hospitals where the project equipment has been provided.

The equipment consists of incubators, warming lamps, ultrasound machines and Cardio Tocographs (TCGs). This includes surgery and

clothing for use in the operation rooms.

In addition to installing the equipment at the Mother and Newborn Hospital, some equipment will be distributed to Xamneua district hospital in Huaphan province, to Kham, Khoun and Nonghet district hospitals and in Phonsavanh town in Xieng Khuang province, providing much needed modern medical equipment related to mother and child health.

Officials from the two organisations believe that the equipment will contribute directly to cutting death rates of mothers and children in the

years to come.

According to the Lao Social Indicator Survey in 2012, the death rate of birthing mothers is 357 out of every 100,000 births. The death rate of children under one year is 68 out of every 1,000 live births, and for children under five it is 79 out of every 1,000 live births.

The Swiss-Lao Hospital Project is an initiative by Swiss doctors, midwives, nurses and association members who have lobbied for an improvement in the medical care available to mothers and children in Laos since 2000.

## Weather forecast

Xieng Khuang				
Date	Temperature in (C)		Weather	
	Min	Max		
25/11/2015	16	25		Isolated showers
26/11/2015	15	25		Fog
27/11/2015	16	26		Mist
Luang Namtha				
Date	Temperature in (C)		Weather	
	Min	Max		
25/11/2015	18	30		Isolated showers
26/11/2015	17	30		Mist
27/11/2015	17	30		Mist
Luang Prabang				
Date	Temperature in (C)		Weather	
	Min	Max		
25/11/2015	20	30		Isolated showers
26/11/2015	19	30		Mist
27/11/2015	19	30		Mist
Vientiane				
Date	Temperature in (C)		Weather	
	Min	Max		
25/11/2015	24	33		Partly cloudy
26/11/2015	23	33		Mist
27/11/2015	23	32		Mist
Savannakhet				
Date	Temperature in (C)		Weather	
	Min	Max		
25/11/2015	22	33		Partly cloudy
26/11/2015	21	33		Partly cloudy
27/11/2015	21	33		Partly cloudy
Pakxe				
Date	Temperature in (C)		Weather	
	Min	Max		
25/11/2015	22	34		Isolated showers
26/11/2015	21	34		Partly cloudy
27/11/2015	22	34		Partly cloudy