

Hospital bosses take first steps towards improved management

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Lao are developing initiatives to strengthen the management of Lao hospitals. This way, contribute to better patient care and more efficient use of resources.

A workshop to discuss the transfer of practical know-how and skills to prepare for hospital autonomy and strengthen knowledge and competences in hospital management took place on Monday under the Swiss Laos Hospital Project.

Minister of Health Dr Bounfeng Phoummalaysith said Vientiane's main hospitals would pilot a scheme on hospital autonomy, with training to be given to administrators in hospital management and leadership.

He said the workshop aimed to prepare managers for hospital autonomy and improve the quality of services through a trial project in the management of hospital finance and patients.

Participants were advised about tools, checklists and guidelines for hospital management, as well as the monitoring process.

A pilot action plan was proposed, and attendees learnt about leadership, human resources management, financial



Dr Bounfeng Phoummalaysith addresses a workshop on hospital management.

management methods, and other important aspects of hospital administration.

It was suggested that hospital managers could improve the standard of healthcare through better management, including by emulating systems employed at private hospitals.

An expert from the Swiss Laos Hospital Project, Dr Alphons Schnyder said the professional training of medical staff is a central concern of the Swiss Laos Hospital Project.

"The government had been considering the issue of hospital autonomy for some years but the Covid pandemic prevented new systems from being introduced to achieve this," he said.

"This is now a good time to expedite the rollout of hospital autonomy at

the five main hospitals in Vientiane and carry out staff training," he added.

Hospitals in most countries use micro-steering and autonomous requisition and micro-management because it has been proven that managers can get better results than with macro-management, Dr Schnyder said.

A senior official from the Ministry of Health said that although the government has made efforts to uphold people's right to healthcare in recent years and most people now have access to better quality health services, numerous challenges remain.

The improvement of hospital management and corresponding pilot projects in central hospitals in Vientiane has been in progress since last year under the leadership of Dr Schnyder, he said.

As part of people's right to healthcare, it is essential to make it easier for everyone in Laos to access affordable and efficient health services, he added.

The workshop was led by Dr Alphons Schnyder from the Swiss Laos Hospital Project and attended by the directors general of Mahosot, Mittaphab, Setthathirath, Children's, and Mother and Newborn hospitals in Vientiane.



The under-construction terminal at Bokeo international airport.

Bokeo international airport 90 percent complete

Times Reporters

Construction of an international airport in Tonpheung district, Bokeo province, is now 90 percent complete, with the remaining essential facilities currently being installed.

The new airport is being built to handle the anticipated surge in tourists to the area, especially people visiting the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone, which contains a number of recreational facilities and mostly attracts visitors from China.

An official from Laos' Department of Civil Aviation, Mr Juexiong Jongya, who is head of the safety coordination and aviation safety committee as well as the management committee for airport construction, said the airport is nearing completion and the finishing touches are now taking place inside the terminal building.

The airport will open when all construction has been completed and all of the systems that support functioning of the airport are fully operational, he added.

Construction was initially scheduled to take place over 18 months but work was delayed because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Construction began in September 2020, since when a runway, taxiway, parking lot and most airport buildings have been completed.

The new international airport in Tonpheung district is designed to accommodate larger aircraft including the Boeing 747 and Airbus 320. It is located close to the Golden Triangle Special Economic Zone and covers 300 hectares.

It will be the second airport in Bokeo province in addition to the existing small airport located in the provincial capital, Huayxai district.

The construction cost of US\$175 million

is being financed by the Hong Kong-based Greater Bay Area Investment and Development (HK) Limited, which is a member of the Dok Ngiew Kham Group.

The airport will be operated under the Build-Operate-Transfer model and the developer has been granted a 50-year concession.

It will be larger than the existing airport in Huayxai district, which can handle only small aircraft.

The airport will open for domestic travel at the end of this year and for international flights at a later date, Mr Juexiong said.

The passenger terminal can handle up to 600 people and when fully operational is expected to accommodate 1.5 to 2 million passengers a year.

Laos' main airports are Wattay Airport International in Vientiane and smaller airports in Luang Prabang, Oudomxay, Savannakhet and Champassak provinces.

Customs payments... FROM PAGE 1

driving the increase in freight passing through Boten is the introduction of modern systems such as ASYCUDA, SMART Tax, Scanner, EasyPASS, and the Lao National Single Window system.

When the Laos-China Railway first opened in December 2021, trains carrying freight travelled between Laos and China three times a day, but this number has now increased to 10 a day. With China reopening to the outside world, experts believe more freight will be shipped across Laos' borders and that thousands

of Chinese tourists will visit Laos using the Laos-China Railway.

In 2021, only 362 billion kip in tariffs/fees was collected at the Boten International Customs Checkpoint, but this amount surged to 661.5 billion kip in 2022, exceeding the target figure of 515.5 billion kip.

The main items exported were agricultural produce, potassium salt, rubber, and iron ore. Imported goods included items in transit through Laos between China and Thailand, mainly consisting of vegetables, fresh fruit and frozen food.

The value of Thai goods imported and exported through Laos to and from China in 2022 rose to US\$1,339 million, an increase of about 5 percent compared to 2021. Meanwhile the value of goods imported and exported from and to China through Laos to Thailand soared to US\$1,058 million - an increase of 175 percent.

Meanwhile, customs officials have pledged to do more to plug loopholes that enable financial leaks and other forms of tax/tariff invasion as a means to help the government earn more income.



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Temperatures rising, but plateau areas to remain cool

Times Reporters

Temperatures will begin to rise across the country from February 1-5, but Xaysomboun province and plateau areas will stay cool with continuing early morning mist, according to the latest forecast from the Meteorology and Hydrology Department.

In the northeast, temperatures will range from 8C to 24C, where occasional wind gusts and showers are also possible.

Luang Namtha, Bokeo, Oudomxay, Luang Prabang and Xayaboury provinces can expect temperatures of 10C to 32C.

The central provinces of

Vientiane, Borikhamxay, Khammuan and Savannakhet can also expect showers and wind gusts, and an expected temperature range of 15C to 33C.

Xaysomboun province will continue to experience chilly conditions, with morning mist and occasional showers, with temperatures ranging from 8C to 23C.

The south of the country will be warmer, with a temperature range of 16C to 33C, with the possibility of isolated showers. Plateau regions will be cooler, with morning mist and strong breezes, and a temperature range of 5C to 21C.

Vientiane will see higher temperatures than in recent

weeks, with the range forecast at 16C to 33C.

Thailand's Meteorology Department has forecast that provinces bordering Laos, namely Loei, Udon Thani, Nong Khai, Nakhon Phanom and Khon Kaen, will experience low temperatures and mist in the mornings from February 1-5, while isolated thundershowers are possible from February 2-5.

Minimum temperatures will range from 9-21C and maximums from 28-34C, with mountaintops to see the lowest temperatures, with a minimum range of 7-15 °C. Winds will be easterly winds at 10-20 km/hour, according to the Department's website.